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UP bans protests in Ghazipur after girl's death

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Sun Pharma acquires Organon for $ 11.75B

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Hazlewood, Bhuvneshwar help RCB crush Delhi

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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'Once-in-a-generation' pact inked between India & NZ

FTA grants duty-free access to 100% of Indian exports

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

India and New Zealand on Monday signed a "once-in-a-generation" free trade agreement (FTA), granting duty-free access to 100 per cent of Indian exports, including textiles, leather footwear, gems and jewellery, to the island nation.

The pact, expected to come into force by the end of this year pending approval from the New Zealand Parliament and India's Union Cabinet, was signed by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and visiting New Zealand Trade and Investment Minister Todd McClay in New Delhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the agreement would benefit farmers, youth, women, MSMEs, artisans, startups, students and innovators. New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon described it as a landmark deal offering exporters access to 1.4 billion people and a rapidly growing global economy.

The agreement is projected to double bilateral trade in goods and services to USD 5 billion within five years. It also includes an estimated USD 20 billion foreign direct investment commitment over 15 years. India has opened 70 per cent of tariff lines covering 95 per cent of bilateral trade value, while keeping sensitive sectors such as dairy, select agricultural products, sugar, and certain metals outside the agreement. New Zealand has provided India duty-free access across all tariff lines, previously subject to tariffs of up to 10 per cent on products like ceramics, carpets, and auto components.

Total bilateral trade stood at USD 2.4 billion in 2024, with services forming a significant share driven by IT and business services. —*PTI*

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Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal receives a framed cricket jersey from New Zealand Minister for Trade Todd McClay at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Monday —*PTI*

Mysuru: 7 sheep die after drinking contaminated water

MYSURU, 27 APRIL

Seven sheep died after drinking water contaminated with urea at Arabagere village in the Hanur taluk of Chamarajanagar district on Monday. The sheep belonged to one Mutturaj. A herd of 50 sheep was grazing in the fields. Nine of them drank water from a pond in the village and seven of them died on the spot, while the condition of the other two is critical. Hanur taluk veterinarian Dr Siddaraju conducted the autopsy. Police thinks somebody added urea to the pond water. Meanwhile, Sheep owner Mutturaj of the village who lodged a complaint with the police urged the taluk administration to provide compensation for him as he had suffered a loss of nearly Rs 1.5 lakh. He also demanded an investigation. Hanur police have registered a case. —*SALAR NEWS*

2 Odisha teachers die of 'heatstroke' amid Census work

BHUBANESWAR/ BARIPADA, 27 APRIL

Two school teachers engaged in Census work have died within two days in Odisha, allegedly due to heatstroke, officials said on Monday. The incidents occurred in Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh districts, where temperatures have crossed 37°C, marking the third such death linked to census duties in the state. In Mayurbhanj, Rajkapur Hembram, a teacher at Baidyanath High School, collapsed after returning from door-to-door enumeration and later died in hospital. His family alleged he had been under pressure to continue duties despite illness. In Sundargarh, Anurag Ekka, a teacher at Jarada Government High School, fell ill during census work on Saturday and died the same day. Authorities are awaiting reports to confirm the cause of death. The state had issued SOPs restricting fieldwork during peak heat hours and advising hydration and ORS use. —*PTI*

4 of family die after eating watermelon

MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

A couple and their two minor daughters died after suspected food poisoning linked to eating watermelon following a family gathering at their south Mumbai residence, police confirmed. The victims, Abdullah, 40; his wife Nasrin, 35; and daughters Zainab, 13; and Ayesha, 16; fell ill shortly after the event on 25 April. They had consumed chicken pulav along with five other guests and later ate watermelon. The family was first taken to a private hospital; as their condition worsened, they were shifted to JJ Hospital, where all succumbed on Sunday. Abdullah was the last to die around 10.30pm. A post-mortem has been conducted, and the histopathology report is awaited. A case of accidental death has been registered. —*PTI*

RS Chairman accepts merger of 7 AAP MPs with BJP

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Seven rebel AAP MPs have officially joined BJP parliamentary party after Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan accepted their merger on Monday, even as AAP vowed to challenge the move in court under the anti-defection law.

The development has significantly altered the composition of the Upper House, reducing AAP's strength to three members from 10, while increasing the BJP's tally to 113 in the 245-member Rajya Sabha.

The seven MPs — Raghav Chadha, Ashok Mittal, Harbhajan Singh, Sandeep Pathak, Vikramjit Sahney, Swati Maliwal, and Rajinder Gupta — had on Friday submitted a petition seeking recognition as BJP members.

BJP said the MPs had joined the "NDA under Narendra Modi" and left the "tukde-tukde INDI Alliance". AAP's Sanjay Singh said the party had already filed objections before the Chairman, seeking disqualification of the MPs. "We hope the Chairman will act in accordance with the Constitution. If not, we will approach the court," he said. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 3

TMC MP attacked, jawan shot at in Bengal

KOLKATA, 27 APRIL

Violence broke out in southern West Bengal ahead of polling in the second phase of Assembly elections, with a TMC MP allegedly attacked and a CISF jawan shot at in separate incidents.

In Hooghly district, Arambagh MP Mitali Bag alleged that BJP workers vandalised her vehicle in Goghat while she was travelling to attend a rally addressed by Abhishek Banerjee. She claimed she was injured by shattered glass (in pic) after her car was attacked near a BJP office, and later admitted to Arambagh hospital. Banerjee condemned the incident, while the BJP dismissed the charge as "drama" and blamed TMC supporters.

In a separate incident in Bhatpara, North 24 Parganas, a CISF jawan identified as Yogesh Sharma was injured after being shot outside the residence of BJP candidate Pawan Singh. Police said four people, including a TMC councillor, have been arrested. The Election Commission has sought a report. Meanwhile, eight crude bombs were recovered from a school in Habra, later defused by security personnel. —*PTI*

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Central forces to stay in WB 60 days after results

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday said Central forces would remain deployed in West Bengal for 60 more days after the Assembly elections, asserting that people should vote without fearing "Didi's goons". Shah made the remarks while addressing a gathering after leading a massive road show in Behala, where voting will take place in the second and final phase of the West Bengal assembly elections on 29 April. —*PTI*

Boy dies after fall as emergency chain fails to halt train

JALPAIGURI, 27 APRIL

A boy travelling in a crowded train on the Rani Nagar–New Jalpaiguri section fell onto the tracks on Monday but could not be rescued after the emergency chain reportedly failed to stop the train.

Panic broke out as passengers, prompted by the frantic cries of the boy's sister, repeatedly pulled the chain, the standard safety mechanism in such situations. However, in what passengers described as "absolute negligence", the train allegedly continued for another 10–15 kilometres without halting. The incident came to light through a viral video shared on X by a user identified as @rameshofficial0. In the clip, a passenger narrates the sequence of events, claiming that despite pulling the chain multiple times and contacting emergency services, including dialling 112, railway authorities failed to respond.

"We informed the TT and called the railways, but received no support. The train has not stopped yet. The boy fell 10–15 km back. We don't know his condition," he says in the video. —*Agencies*

BUT WITH NO NUKE TALKS

Iran offers to end Hormuz chokehold

CAIRO, 27 APRIL

Iran has proposed ending its chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz without addressing its nuclear programme, according to two regional officials, as diplomatic efforts to stabilise the region continue.

The proposal, conveyed to the United States via Pakistan, also calls for Washington to lift its blockade on Iran. However, it is unlikely to gain traction with US President Donald Trump, who has insisted that any agreement must include curbs on Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

"We have all the cards. If they want to talk, they can come to us, or they can call us," Trump told Fox News Channel, reiterating that Iran "will not have a nuclear weapon".

The development comes as Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited Russia, describing the trip as an opportunity to coordinate with Moscow on the ongoing conflict involving Iran, Israel and the United States.

Both sides have continued to exchange threats. Iran's military warned it would respond strongly to continued US actions, including naval blockades, while Trump last week authorised forces to "shoot and kill" small boats suspected of laying mines in the waterway.

Trump also said Tehran submitted a "much better" proposal shortly after he cancelled a planned Islamabad visit by US envoys.

Tensions over Iran's nuclear programme remain central, with the UN watchdog reporting Tehran holds 440 kg of uranium enriched to 60 per cent purity, close to weapons-grade. —*PTI*

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Iran fires at tanker with Indian crew

A Togo-flagged oil and chemical tanker, MT CHIRON 7, was involved in an incident near Oman after Iranian authorities fired warning shots, officials said on Monday. The vessel was near Shinas outer port limits on 25 April when it encountered Iranian Coast Guard action involving nearby ships. All 17 Indian crew members on board are safe, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways said. —*PTI*

INDIA TO IMPORT 83 LAKH TONNES FERTILISERS DESPITE HIGH PRICES

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

India plans to import 64 lakh tonnes of urea and 19 lakh tonnes of other fertilisers this kharif season, as the West Asia crisis has nearly doubled global prices, increasing the import bill, the government announced.

Addressing an inter-ministerial briefing, Aparna S Sharma, Additional Secretary in the Department of Fertilisers, said retail prices of urea and Di Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) would remain unchanged, with supply adequate for the season. "MRP of fertilisers like urea and DAP remain the same. There has been no change," she stated.

Urea sells at Rs 266.50 per 45 kg bag, DAP at Rs 1,350 per 50kg. Since the crisis, 9.4 lakh tonnes of urea have arrived, with 13.07 lakh tonnes secured in February and 25 lakh tonnes expected in May. Most imports are from the Strait of Hormuz.

Domestic production dipped in March but improved, with gas availability rising from 60-65 per cent to 97 per cent. The government has floated a tender for 19 lakh tonnes of non-urea fertilisers, including DAP, TSP, and Ammonium Sulphate, to meet demand. Further import plans will be made after assessing domestic supply and demand. —*PTI*

Is it 'rape' if duo lived-in for 15 yrs, have a child: SC

- Judges remarked on whether asking about consensual cohabitation amounted to victim shaming.

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Supreme Court on Monday questioned whether a criminal offence of rape can arise from the breakdown of a consensual live-in relationship, while hearing a plea arising from Madhya Pradesh.

A woman challenged Madhya Pradesh High Court order that quashed an FIR against her former partner, alleging sexual assault based on a false promise of marriage.

"Where is the question of an offence when there is a consensual relationship?" Justice BV Nagarathna observed.

The bench noted that the couple had lived together for around 15 years and had a child, observing that continued cohabitation complicated allegations rooted in promise of marriage.

The Court also questioned whether a break-up after such a long relationship could constitute a crime, remarking that parties "can walk out any day". The petitioner's counsel alleged that the accused had concealed an existing marriage. However, the bench said remedies such as maintenance for the child or proceedings relating to bigamy could be pursued if deception in marriage was established.

The judges also remarked on whether asking about consensual cohabitation amounted to victim shaming.

The Court issued notice in the matter and said parties should consider mediation and an amicable settlement. —*PTI*

HER BODY, HER CHOICE

SC allows 15-year-old girl to abort 28 weeks pregnancy

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The Supreme Court of India has allowed a 15-year-old girl to medically terminate a pregnancy of over 28 weeks, underscoring that a woman's reproductive autonomy must be accorded the highest importance.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan said courts should not adopt a prohibitory approach when dealing with pleas from women seeking termination of unwanted pregnancies, particularly minors.

The court held that the choice of the pregnant woman takes precedence over the interests of the unborn child, warning that compelling a minor to continue such a pregnancy could have severe consequences for her mental health, education, social standing and overall development.

"The right to make decisions concerning one's body… is an integral facet of personal liberty and privacy under Article 21," the bench said, adding that forcing a woman to carry an unwanted pregnancy would breach her constitutional right.

It rejected the argument that women could be compelled to give birth and later opt for adoption, calling such reasoning flawed in cases of unwanted pregnancies.

The court also cautioned that denying permission for late-term termination does not prevent abortions but drives women towards unsafe, unregulated procedures, undermining the intent of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act.

Noting the minor had attempted self-harm twice, the court directed that the procedure be carried out at AIIMS with full medical safeguards at the earliest. —*PTI*

>>More on Pg 4

Kejri won't appear before HC judge

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

AAP Chief Arvind Kejriwal has written to Delhi High Court Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma saying he will no longer participate in the excise case, either in person or via counsel, AAP said on Monday.

In a four-page letter, Kejriwal said that it was now "impossible to receive an impartial hearing" in Justice Sharma's court.

Kejriwal cites his earlier plea to recuse Justice Sharma from the case, which was rejected on 20 April. Kejriwal acknowledged that the plea was interpreted as a personal attack. He clarified his issue with Justice Sharma's association with the RSS's legal front, the ABAP. Addressing potential criticism, Kejriwal clarified that he is not against the judiciary. Kejriwal sais he is prepared to bear the consequences. — *PTI*

— PTI

Speaker Khader finishes fourth in Dirt Prix event

MANGALURU, 27 APRIL

Karnataka Legislative Assembly Speaker UT Khader finished fourth in a dirt track racing event on Sunday, organised by the Indian Motor Sports Club. The Dirt Prix drew participation from multiple racers and aimed to promote grassroots motorsport across the State. Driving a Volkswagen Polo GT, Khader narrowly missed a podium finish, ending just seconds behind the third-place finisher. An avid motorsport enthusiast since his college days, Khader has participated in several racing events. Speaking informally after the event, he said he continues to follow motorsport and enjoys driving, describing the experience as a 'refreshing change' from his official responsibilities. Organisers said his performance on the dirt track was consistent with his previous racing record. —*PTI*

Ministerial aspirants expect 'happy news' in May

40 MLAs will fly to Delhi in May to meet Cong top brass

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

Ministerial aspirants pushing for a Cabinet reshuffle and Congress leaders backing Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar as Chief Minister are expecting "sweet" or "happy news" from the party High Command next month.

The buzz comes amid growing speculation over a possible leadership change and Cabinet rejig after 4 May, when results of Assembly elections in four states and one Union Territory, along with bypolls in Karnataka, will be declared.

Senior Congress MLA and Chief Whip Ashoka Pattan said AICC General Secretary in charge of Karnataka Randeep Singh Surjewala had assured a group of legislators of "sweet news" by the second or third week of May. Pattan said around 40 MLAs are planning to travel to New Delhi after the results to press for a Cabinet reshuffle.

He added that they had also met party president Mallikarjun Kharge, who promised to discuss the matter with Rahul Gandhi.

Party sources indicate a divide in priorities, with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah favouring a Cabinet reshuffle, while Shivakumar is keen on clarity over the leadership issue first. Insiders say that if a reshuffle is approved, it could signal Siddaramaiah completing his full five-year term, potentially limiting Shivakumar's chances of becoming CM.

Congress MLA HD Ranganath, seen as close to Shivakumar, expressed hope the leader would receive "appropriate recognition", noting 15 May, Shivakumar's birthday, as a possible moment for "happy news".

Amid the speculation, Shivakumar said he and Siddaramaiah would abide by whatever decision the party leadership takes. He declined to share details of discussions in Delhi, stating he had full faith in the high command.

The leadership tussle has intensified since the government crossed the halfway mark of its term in November 2025, with speculation fuelled by a reported power-sharing arrangement at the time of government formation in 2023.

Adding to the pressure, a delegation of pontiffs led by Pranavananda Swamiji met Shivakumar, urging the Congress to appoint him Chief Minister as a "birthday gift" decision from the party.

Meanwhile, senior leaders, including Satish Jarkiholi, are reported to be in Delhi for consultations. —*PTI*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, along with others, inaugurated the World Buddha Conference at Nagasena Buddha Vihar in Sadashivanagar, Bengaluru, on Monday —*SALAR*

A delegation of BJP leaders led by Bengaluru Central MP PC Mohan met the Commissioner and submitted a memorandum—*X/@PCMOHANMP*

BJP urges police chief to cancel Umar Khalid event

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

BJP on Monday petitioned Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh to cancel an event supporting activist Umar Khalid.

A delegation of BJP leaders led by Bengaluru Central MP PC Mohan met the Commissioner and submitted a memorandum in this regard.

The editors of the book 'Umar Khalid and His World' will read excerpts from the book on 28 April in Bengaluru, followed by a discussion in which some "historians and intellectuals" are likely to participate.

Khalid is in jail with allegations of conspiracy behind the 2020 Delhi riots.

"In Bengaluru, an event has been organised under the platform "Umar Khalid Prapancha" to support Khalid, who is currently under arrest under anti-terrorism laws," the BJP said in its memorandum.

"The Centre has taken strict action against Naxalites. However, urban Naxals are still active and are indirectly supporting anti-national activities," it alleged.

Further stating that Khalid is facing very serious charges, the memorandum said, the fact that courts have denied him bail for the past three years stands as an indication of his alleged criminal activities.

"Glorifying such an individual would amount to encouraging criminal elements. It is shocking that such an event is being held in our city. It is also a matter of serious concern that pro Umar Khalid slogans and wall writings have already appeared across the city, indicating the spread of such networks," it said.

"In the interest of maintaining peace in the city, we request that the permission granted for this event be withdrawn," it added. — *PTI*

Strictest action promised in 'janivara' row

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

Bengaluru Urban Deputy Commissioner Jagadeesha G said on Monday that the government has decided to take the "strictest possible action" against those responsible for allegedly forcing some students to remove their 'janivara' (sacred thread) before entering the CET exam venue last week.

He said a committee of senior officials constituted to inquire into the incident reported that, prima facie, it appears the students were "intentionally" made to remove the 'janivara'.

The police have already booked three staffers of a private college in Bengaluru for allegedly forcing some students to remove their 'janivara' before entering the CET venue last week.

Similar incidents last year in Shivamogga and Bidar had triggered controversy, following which the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA) issued clear directions not to force students to remove any religious symbol during exams.

"Despite KEA taking measures such as appointing dress code officials and providing training on DOs and DON'Ts to prevent such incidents from recurring, there has been dereliction of duty this time," Jagadeesha told reporters here.

"An FIR has been registered, and arrests have been made. An inquiry has been conducted by senior officials, and those responsible have been suspended," he added.

Stating that the inquiry report has been submitted at the district level, he said it will be forwarded to the government.

It has also been decided that KEA will not conduct CET exams henceforth at the institution where the incident occurred, he added. "The strongest possible action is being taken by the district administration and the government," he added. — *PTI*

M'luru cooker bomb case: Main accused gets 10-yr jail term

BENGALURU/ MANGALURU, 27 APRIL

A special NIA court in Bengaluru on Monday sentenced the prime accused in the Mangaluru cooker bomb case to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 94,000.

The accused, Mohamed Shariq, initially claimed innocence but later pleaded guilty under Section 229 of the CrPC in December 2025, which the court accepted. According to the prosecution, Shariq was carrying a pres-sure cooker improvised explosive device (IED) in an autorickshaw and had allegedly planned to plant it at Mangaluru's Kadri Manjunatha Temple to spread terror among the Hindu community. The low-intensity de-vice accidentally exploded en route on 19 November, 2022.

The court also sentenced him to two years' rigorous imprisonment each under Sections 465 (forgery) and 471 (use of forged documents), with fines of Rs 2,000 each. Additionally, he was awarded 10 years' rigorous imprisonment and fined Rs 10,000 each under Sections 121A, 122, 307 and 326 of the IPC.

Under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, he received 10 years' rigorous imprisonment with fines under multiple sections. A similar sentence was imposed under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908. All sentences will run concurrently. The court allowed set-off for time already spent in custody and directed that fines be used to cover prosecution costs. —*PTI*

PM SENDS WEDDING WISHES TO RAICHUR COUPLE

RAICHUR, 27 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has congratulated a Raichur couple after being invited to their wedding by the bridegroom.

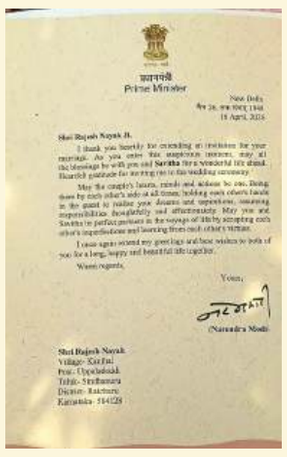
Rajesh Nayak, from Kanihal village in Sindhanur taluk of Raichur district, had sent an invitation to the Prime Minister's Office for his wedding with Savita, held on 13 April. In response, Modi sent a letter dated 16 April, thanking him for the invitation and wishing the couple "a long, happy and beautiful life together".

"I thank you very much for inviting me to your wedding celebration. I wish you and Savita... all the best for a bright future," the Prime Minister wrote on his official letterhead.

The letter reached Rajesh about three days after the ceremony and has since created a buzz in the village and on social media.

Rajesh expressing joy said PM Modi's letter has "brought joy not only to me but also to our entire family." —*Salar News*

- Rajesh Nayak, from Kanihal village in Raichur district, had sent an invitation to the Prime Minister's Office for his wedding with Savita, held on 13 April. In response, Modi sent a letter dated 16 April congratulating the couple



PM's letter reached Rajesh 3 days after wedding —*SALAR*

Minister Lad flips off Trump over 'hellhole' jibe

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

Minister Santosh Lad courted a major controversy by showing a middle finger while reacting to remarks by US President Donald Trump who referred to India as a "hellhole."

Lad said the comment insulted both the country and Prime Minister Modi, prompting his strong reaction during a press conference.

The incident occurred in Sandur in Ballari district, where Lad lashed out at Trump's remarks.

He (Trump) insulted our Prime Minister, and recently he called India a hellhole. Mr Trump I know you are the US President But that doesn't mean that you can speak whatever you want about my country. I can show you a middle finger also, but we stand united," Lad said.

His remarks, coupled with the inappropriate gesture, have triggered sharp reactions, with critics calling it undiplomatic while supporters argue it reflects public anger over Trump's statements.

Lad also accused the Prime Minister of failing to respond strongly, terming their silence "embarrassing."

The controversy erupted with a post shared by Trump on Truth Social recently, where he endorsed content criticising birthright citizenship in the US.

The post, originally linked to conservative commentator Michael Savage, described India and China as "hellholes on the planet."

It claimed that birthright citizenship allows immigrants to secure US citizenship for their children and later bring extended family members into the country.

"A baby here becomes an instant citizen, and then they bring in their entire family from China, or India or some other hellhole," the letter stated. — *Agencies*

Minister Santosh Lad courted a major controversy by showing a middle finger in response to remarks by US President —*SCREENGRAP*

FIGHTING THE HEAT

Worker at an ice store in Bengaluru's Shivajinagar loads blocks of ice for sale as the temperature in the City touched 37°C mark -*MOHAMMED ASAD*

Bengaluru to get Asia's largest water management centre

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

The Integrated Intelligent Water and Sewerage Management Centre, ranking among the largest in Asia, is ready for inauguration by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar. BWSSB Chairman Ram Prasath Manohar visited the centre in Bengaluru on Monday. He reviewed the final preparations at the facility.

The centre, part of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) funded Cauvery Stage 5 project, will also oversee the 775 MLD Cauvery Stage 5 project, which supplies water to 110 villages.

"This new Integrated Intelligent Water and Sewerage Management Centre is a massive system designed to simultaneously monitor and manage the entire city's drinking water and sewerage network in real time," BWSSB said in a statement.

Water quality parameters are continuously monitored during supply. If contamination is detected, an alert message is immediately sent, ensuring the supply of safe drinking water to citizens, it said.

By using AI, the system can accurately predict water demand across different areas and instantly detect pipeline leakages, BWSSB said. The centre also lays the groundwork for creating a digital twin of the entire network in the future.

The command centre is integrated with the water treatment plants at TK Halli, Harohalli, and Tataguni, as well as all Ground Level Reservoirs (GLRs) in the city. —*PTI*

Integrated Intelligent Water and Sewerage Management Centre is a system designed to monitor, manage City's drinking water, sewerage —*x*

LESSON FOR MISCHIEF MAKERS

Two booked for disabling over 240 CCTVs at Chinnaswamy Stadium

BENGALURU, 27 APRIL

An FIR has been registered against two people for allegedly tampering with the CCTV camera system at Bengaluru's M Chinnaswamy Stadium ahead of the IPL match on 24 April, police said on Monday. The issue was detected and rectified within an hour and did not affect the match.

According to the FIR, more than 240 cameras went offline on the morning of the match. The alleged sabotage affected the availability of surveillance feeds required by police personnel deployed for match security, it added.

A senior police officer said that on Friday morning, at around 11.30am. The two accused, reportedly employees working under a sub-vendor providing digital services during match days, carried out the act.

The two employees, reportedly associated with subcontractor IVS Digital Solutions, identified as Manjunath, 37, and Abdul Kalam, 19, allegedly entered the stadium using a deactivated access card and tampered with critical surveillance infrastructure, police said.

According to the FIR, they accessed the CCTV room without authorisation and later moved to a junction box near the parking area, where they damaged fibre connections. They also damaged the Network Video Recorder (NVR) systems, disrupting surveillance coverage in key security zones, including entry gates and perimeter areas.

Preliminary investigation suggests that the two employees may have had a personal grudge against the company, possibly related to pending payments, which may have led them to commit the act, he said.

The complaint was lodged by Aditya Bhat of Staqu Technologies Pvt Ltd, which provides AI-driven surveillance support during match days, police said. —*PTI*

- A senior police officer said two accused, reportedly employees, working under a sub-vendor providing digital services during match days, carried out the act

The accused damaged Network Video Recorder (NVR) systems, disrupting surveillance coverage in key security zones, including entry gates —*AI*

PM to attend Sikkim's 50th Statehood Day

GANGTOK, 27 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Sikkim on Monday evening to attend the closing ceremony of 50 years of statehood and unveil development projects worth Rs 4,000 crore. The PM was received by Governor Om Prakash Mathur and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang at the Libing helipad. Elaborate security arrangements have been put in place in the state capital and surrounding areas in view of Modi's visit, they said. He led a colourful roadshow to Lok Bhavan from the helipad. The Prime Minister will visit the Orchidarium in Gangtok on Tuesday. To showcase the ecological and floral heritage of the state, a 'Swarnajayanti Maitri Manjari Park' has been developed as a world-class Orchid Experience Centre on the occasion.—*PTI*

—*ANI*

T'gana CM plans Parl-style upgrade of state Assembly

HYDERABAD, 27 APRIL

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday proposed developing the Assembly premises on the lines of the Parliament in Delhi, along with the construction of a central hall. He held a meeting with Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar, Legislative Council Chairman Gutha Sukhender Reddy, and officials on the civil works to be taken up in the legislature premises. The CM recommended completing the Central Hall by the next session, a press release said. Reddy suggested setting up a club for members in the public garden within the legislature premises, along with a walking track and sports facilities.He emphasised that the works should be carried out without causing any damage to the heritage structures in the premises.—*PTI*

Waste dumped in well at Kerala leader's house

KOZIKHODE, 27 APRIL

Police registered a case and launched a probe after septic waste was dumped into the drinking water well at the residence of an RMP leader in Nadapuram here, officials said on Monday. According to police, the incident took place at the residence of Revolutionary Marxist Part leader TP Manojan in Thuneri, Nadapuram. The RMP is an ally of the Congress-led UDF with its base in Vadakara and is active in the Nadapuram area. The incident occurred between Saturday evening and Sunday morning when unidentified persons allegedly trespassed into thecompound and dumped septic waste into the well, the water from which was used for drinking.—*PTI*

Repolling in Gujarat after EVM glitch in local polls

SURENDRANAGAR, 27 APRIL

Repolling was held on Monday at a village in Gujarat's Surendranagar district where voting was cancelled due to a technical glitch in an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), officials said. The glitch in the EVM occurred at Jepar village in Chuda taluka during the local body elections held across the state on Sunday. The elections were held across 15 municipal corporations, 84 municipalities, 34 district panchayats and 260 taluka panchayats, making it one of the largest electoral exercises in Gujarat. Voting for the district panchayat and taluka panchayat seats had been suspended in Jepar village after a glitch in the EVM and ballot unit.—*PTI*

Will back in WB for oath taking ceremony: PM

Modi announces five employment measures

KOLKATA, 27 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the Vijay Sankalp rally at Barrackpore in North 24 Parganas district on Monday —*PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday exuded confidence that the BJP would form the next government in West Bengal after the Assembly polls, asserting that he would return to the state for the oath-taking ceremony.

Addressing a rally at Barrackpore in North 24 Parganas district, Modi announced five employment-focused measures, including transparent government recruitment, filling up of vacancies, implementation of the Seventh Pay Commission benefits, a 125-day rural employment guarantee, expansion of the creative economy through content creator labs, and full benefits for street vendors under the PM SVANidhi scheme.

He sharpened the BJP's pitch against the ruling TMC, accusing it of presiding over "syndicate raj", political violence, infiltration and economic decline.

He said Barrackpore was now preparing the ground for change in West Bengal.

He said West Bengal's progress was inseparable from India's rise and that the eastern region must regain its historical strength.

Drawing parallels with recent BJP gains in Bihar and Odisha, Modi said it was now West Bengal's turn for the "lotus to bloom".

Modi alleged that TMC had reduced governance to intimidation, abuse and lies.

Modi claiming that industries were collapsing while criminal networks thrived in the state.

He said the TMC had abandoned the very slogan on which it came to power.

Modi assured that BJP would ensure women's safety and justice to victims.

He also attacked the TMC over alleged demographic change and illegal infiltration. The BJP government would ensure citizenship for all eligible refugee Matua families, he said. —*PTI*

Mamata ends hustings in Bhabanipur turf

CM to face BJP's Suvendu Adhikari in key seat

KOLKATA, 27 APRIL

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee with party leaders and workers during a roadshow in Kolkata on Monday—*PTI*

Ahead of the second phase of polling in West Bengal on 29 April, West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress candidate Mamata Banerjee on Monday held a padyatra in Bhabanipur constituency and interacted with the people.

The TMC Chief was accompanied by party Rajya Sabha MP Sagarika Ghose and candidates Aroop Biswas and Debasish Kumar from Tollygunge and Rashbehari, respectively.

People could be seen waiting on the roadside and on rooftops and balconies for the Chief Minister to arrive. They waved at Banerjee as she greeted them with folded hands, walking briskly, as her party compatriots had a tough time keeping pace with her.

The Chief Minister is contesting from the Bhabanipur assembly seat, where she is pitted against her bete noire, Suvendu Adhikari of the BJP, who defeated her in the 2021 elections in Nandigram.

Banerjee was subsequently elected from Bhabanipur in a byelection.

The roadshow started at Sukanta Setu in the Jadavpur area of the city and culminated at Gopalnagar crossing, past her Kalighat residence, while she stopped at two separate places in between.

TMC flags, festoons, cutouts of Banerjee and banners with slogans in favour of the candidates adorned the roadsides through which the road show passed and culminated at around 5.30pm. —*PTI*

> **This is TMC's rightful fund that the BJP have stopped. The Centre has deprived us of Rs 1 lakh crore in central dues. Take the money from BJP and vote for TMC**
>
> -Abhisekh Banerjee, TMC leader

Varsity teachers flag stressful poll duties

KOLKATA, 27 APRIL

Teachers of West Bengal's Visva Bharati University have written to Vice Chancellor Probir Kumar Ghosh over "extremely stressful" poll-related duties, seeking immediate intervention of the Election Commission.

In a letter dated 26 April, several faculty members said they were under "extreme mental and physical stress" due to continuous deployment for poll-related work across districts.

The first phase of elections to the 294-member West Bengal assembly was held on 23 April, while the second phase will take place on 29 April, with counting on 4 May.

"We are constrained to draw your urgent attention," the teachers said, noting many had been assigned duties in South 24 Parganas and asked to report by April 28 morning, barely a day after completing assignments in Birbhum.

"Some have to travel as far as Sagar Island," it stated, citing limited transport options. "At this time of the year, this is extremely stressful on health. This is also severely affecting our primary responsibility – teaching," they said. They urged intervention with the poll panel. —*PTI*

WB seizures cross Rs 500-crore mark

The total seizure of illicit inducements in West Bengal on Monday crossed Rs 510 crore, the Election Commission said.

The seizures are higher than the recoveries recorded during the Assembly polls in 2021 which totalled Rs 339 crore.

Officials said the latest recoveries are also higher than those recovered in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls in the state.

The first phase of elections was held on 23 April, while the second phase is on Wednesday.

The recoveries include Rs 30 crore in cash, over 48,000 litres of liquor worth Rs 126.85 crore, drugs worth Rs 110.12 crore and precious metals worth Rs 58.28 crore. —*PTI*

HC rejects PIL on Suvendu's candidature

The Calcutta High Court on Monday rejected a PIL seeking cancellation of BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari's candidature in the Bhabanipur constituency, which will go to the polls in the second phase on 29 April. Adhikari is pitted against Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of the TMC in the constituency. The petitioner sought the rejection of Adhikari's candidature, alleging that he had made unsecular remarks—*PTI*

AIADMK leader alleges electoral malpractices by DMK

CHENNAI, 27 APRIL

AIADMK leader **IS Inbadurai** on Monday alleged that the ruling DMK involved in "electoral malpractices" in several constituencies during the Assembly polls held on 23 April and urged the Election Commission to take action.

Alleging that the DMK has "distributed money to bribe the voters," the AIADMK leader, who is also a Rajya Sabha MP, claimed that in Coimbatore and Karur, "several malpractices" were done by the DMK.

In Coimbatore south constituency, DMK candidate distributed gold coins to the voters, he alleged. V Senthil Balaji is the DMK candidate in this constituency.

The AIADMK had already lodged a complaint with the EC on the issue.

Inbadurai expressed confidence that AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami will be the next chief minister.

He said the people of Tamil Nadu wanted "change of government," and added that the "AIADMK is the only saviour" of the people.

Meanwhile, the counting of votes for the Tamil Nadu Assembly election will begin at 8 am on 4 May and initially the postal ballots will be taken up for counting.

The counting of votes recorded in electronic voting machines will be counted at 62 counting centres. —*PTI*

OATH OF DUTY

Telangana Minister Mohammad Azharuddin takes oath as a Member of Legislative Council under the Governors quota in Hyderabad on Monday—*PTI*

Cong MLA wants Trump-like attack on India: BJP hits out

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The BJP on Monday asked Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to condemn his party MLA Vijay Wadettiwar remarks, alleging the legislator justified the shooting at an event attended by US President Donald Trump in Washington and was "praying for a similar attack" on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a video shared by the ruling party, the Maharashtra MLA purportedly says, "As you sow, so shall you reap. Whatever one does, one has to face the consequences," while alleging that Trump, during his tenure, has sought to dominate other countries and has "disturbed" global peace.

Trump, First Lady Melania Trump, Vice President JD Vance and other officials were evacuated unharmed after a man fired shots outside the venue. Posting a video, BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla alleged, "In opposing Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Congress party is now going against the country.

Vijay Wadettiwar has justified the shooting attempt on Trump and said that a similar sentiment exists in India. In a way, he is hoping that such an incident happens here too," He also accused the MLA of past controversial remarks and demanded an apology, calling the comments irresponsible.

Wadettiwar said, "Trump has destroyed America in pursuit of fulfilling his ambitions and desires, just like what is happening in our country." He said people will respond. —*PTI*

> Wadettiwar said, "Today, Trump has destroyed America in pursuit of fulfilling his ambitions and desires, just like what is happening in our country." He said people will respond.

CALLS IT HISTORIC DAY

Ladakh LG approves creation of five new districts

LEH/JAMMU

Vinai Kumar Saxena —*WIKIPEDIA*

Ladakh Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Monday approved the creation of five new districts in the Union Territory, fulfilling the aspirations and long-pending demand of the people of the region.

He termed the decision a "historic day" for Ladakh.

"I have approved the notification for the creation of five new districts in Ladakh," Saxena said in a post.

Saxena said that with the creation of five new districts -- Nubra, Sham, Changthang, Zanskar and Drass -- Ladakh will now have seven districts, taking the total number of districts in the Union Territory to seven.

Earlier, Leh and Kargil were the only two districts in Ladakh, the largest Union Territory in terms of area but the second least populous. It has an expanse of 86,904 square kilometres bordering China and Pakistan, with a population of 2.74 lakh, according to the 2011 census.

The LG added that this "transformative decision, already approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs in August 2024, under the leadership of Minister of Home Affairs Amit Shah, would strengthen grassroots governance, decentralise administration and ensure faster delivery of public services to the people of Ladakh, especially those in remote and far-flung areas".

The Centre bifurcated Jammu and Kashmir into two Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh in 2019, by abrogating Article 370 of the Constitution. —

All 7 MPs can't be wrong: Raghav on exit from AAP

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

> **The ED raids that may well have taken place against some others will of course no longer happen. It is therefore both a surgical strike and a pre-emptive action. Lotus has become Lootus**
>
> -Jairam Ramesh, Congress leader

Raghav Chadha, who along with six other AAP MPs merged with the BJP, said he quit the party alleging a "toxic work environment" and asserted that "not all seven MPs can be wrong", adding "one or two persons can be wrong, but not all seven", as he defended his exit amid questions.

He said in a video on social media that he left a successful career as a chartered accountant to enter politics and gave 15 years of his "prime youth" to build AAP, claiming leaders were stopped from working and speaking in Parliament and the party had been captured by "corrupt and compromised people" acting for personal gain.

AAP Delhi chief Saurabh Bharadwaj rejected Chadha's analogy, saying even employees leaving companies serve a notice period rather than conspiring to damage an organisation's image, and argued that political parties are based on ideology, alleging Chadha had already aligned with the BJP under pressure from investigations.

The remarks came after Chadha and six other AAP Rajya Sabha MPs, including Sandeep Pathak and Ashok Mittal, announced their decision to join the BJP, a move later approved by the Rajya Sabha Chairman, taking the BJP's strength in the Upper House to 113 and reducing the AAP to three members.

Meanwhile, Bharadwaj said an employee leaving a company serves a three-month notice period and does not conspire to damage its image and must follow professional ethics. —*PTI*

Delivery agent found dead in iron box in Gurugram

GURUGRAM, 27 APRIL

The body of 24-year-old delivery agent Aman was found inside an iron box in a Gurugram slum area, police reported on Monday. Aman, from Bihar's Saharsa district, was allegedly murdered, with a woman in a live-in relationship and her friend booked for the crime. His elder brother, Umashankar, filed a police complaint after being informed by Aman's friend that he was murdered and his body hidden in an iron box. The police recovered the body on Sunday evening, with sharp weapon marks indicating a three to four-day-old injury. A probe is ongoing, and the accused are expected to be arrested soon. *—PTI*

Keralam fireworks explosion death toll rises to 17

THRISSUR, 27 APRIL

The death toll from the Mundathikode fireworks explosion has risen to 17, after one more person succumbed in hospital, police confirmed. Rakesh, 29, a fireworks manufacturer from Kundannur, was critically injured during the incident on 21 April and later died at Thrissur Medical College. Rakesh had over 85 per cent burns and was admitted to ICU. The incident involved 38 persons, with four missing and the condition of another injured person remaining critical. DNA analysis is underway to identify the missing. The fireworks were for Thrissur Pooram, and the celebrations have been scaled down. A judicial inquiry has been ordered into the incident. *—PTI*

UP triple murder suspect injured in encounter

BULANDSHAHR, 27 APRIL

An accused involved in the triple murder at a birthday party here was injured during a police encounter on Monday, officials confirmed. The incident originates from Saturday night at a gym in Bulandshahr district, where a birthday celebration for Jeetu turned tragic after an altercation allegedly over cake smearing escalated into the killing of three individuals — Amardeep, 30, Manish, 28, and Akash, 18. All belonged to the same family, said officials.A family member, Sanjay, stated that Manish was his younger brother, Akash his nephew, and Amardeep was his uncle's son. A case was registered, with three suspects Rupesh, Mayank, and Naresh previously arrested and questioned. Mayank revealed he had hidden an illegal firearm under a flyover. Police took him to recover the weapon, but he attempted to escape, opening fire on officers with the concealed firearm. Police retaliated in self-defence, injuring him in the leg, and he was overpowered and arrested. *—PTI*

—PTI

'Sarke Chunar' row: Dutt to fund 50 tribal girls' edu

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Actor Sanjay Dutt appeared before the National Commission for Women (NCW) on Monday in connection with the controversy over the song 'Sarke Chunar Teri Sarke' and submitted a written apology, . During the hearing, held before NCW chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar, the commission raised concerns over the indecent representation of women in the song of the movie 'KD The Devil.' The chairperson emphasised whether due diligence was undertaken before participating in content that could be perceived as promoting objectification of women. As a corrective measure, Sanjay Dutt committed himself to sponsoring the education of 50 tribal girls, the National Commission for Women said in a statement. *—PTI*

UP bans protests in Ghazipur after girl's death

No group allowed to visit girl's village

LUCKNOW/GHAZIPUR, 27 APRIL

Worried over the law and order situation in Ghazipur after the death of a teenager earlier this month, the UP government has banned all demonstrations and has also barred anyone from visiting her village.

The Uttar Pradesh government issued a statement in Lucknow, saying "unverified rumours" are being spread by certain "mischievous elements" and opposition parties are "attempting to sensationalise the matter."

"Ghazipur District Magistrate Anupam Shukla has imposed Section 163 of BNSS across the district. Under this provision, no political party or group is permitted to assemble anywhere in the district," the statement read.

The order shall remain in force until 30 April, it said.

The Samajwadi Party announced on Friday that a delegation led by party president Akhilesh Yadav will visit the village and meet the girl's family on 29 April.

The body of the 17-year-old girl, who belongs to an OBC community, was found in the Ganga in Karanda area of Ghazipur district on 15 April, with her family alleging sexual assault and murder.

Police said a murder case has been registered, although the post-mortem report suggested drowning, and initial investigation has indicated possible suicide, citing a relationship between the deceased and the main accused who has also been arrested.

The Ghazipur police in UP have registered cases against two X handles, Congress@INDIndia and the Samajwadi Party Media Cell (@mediacellsp), for allegedly spreading rumours by making "baseless, misleading, and false" remarks regarding the alleged sexual assault and murder of a girl.

In a statement issued late on Sunday night in Ghazipur, police said, "The Karanda police station has registered a case and is initiating legal action against the handles Congress@INDIndia and Samajwadi Party Media Cell (@mediacellsp on the social media platform 'X' for spreading rumours by posting baseless, misleading, and false comments regarding an incident..." *— PTI*

Samajwadi Party workers protest in Lucknow against the suspicious death of a young girl in the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh *—ANI*

- The body of the 17-year-old girl, who belongs to an OBC community, was found in the Ganga in the Karanda area of Ghazipur district on 15 April. Her family alleged that she was sexually assaulted and murdered. Autopsy indicated drowning and possible suicide, due to the relationship between the deceased and the main accused who has also been arrested

APPROACH HC, SAYS SC

Supreme Court rejects plea on demolition drive in Gurugram

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The Supreme Court refused to entertain a petition against the demolition drive in Gurugram, and asked the petitioners to approach the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi disposed of the plea on Monday, allowing the petitioners to make an urgent mention before the high court during the day.

The bench requested the high court's chief justice to entertain the mention either at 1pm or immediately after lunch at 1.45pm.

Senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for the petitioners, argued that local authorities have been carrying out the demolition drive without issuing show-cause notices to the residents by misconstruing an interim HC order.

The bench observed that if the high court's interim order was allegedly being misconstrued by the authorities, then the petitioners should approach the Punjab and Haryana high court.

"If the high court, in its constitutional duty, is taking a drive to stop or prevent unauthorised construction, then as an apex body, why should we cause hindrance?" the CJI observed.

Arguing that the high court had not said anything about the demolition, Sankaranarayanan urged the bench to grant status quo for three to four days and said that the petitioners would approach the high court. "These are completely legal buildings," he said, adding that petitioners are private citizens and the authorities were undertaking the demolition drive without issuing show-cause notices. *— PTI*

SC takes note of assault on woman advocate

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The SC on Monday took note of the brutal assault on a woman advocate allegedly by her husband here, and directed the Delhi Police Commissioner to hand over the probe to a senior cop, preferably a woman of ACP or DCP rank. CJI Surya Kant and Justice Bagchi asked the police to probe why three hospitals refused to admit the victim.

Additional SG Bhati said the victim's husband was arrested on 25 April. The SC said the victim's in-laws had taken away her two children. The bench directed the police to find them. *— PTI*

Ex-Keralam minister's plea binned

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The SC on Monday dismissed a petition filed by former Keralam Minister Antony Raju seeking suspension of his conviction in the 1990 underwear tampering case. Justices Dipankar Datta and Sharma declined to grant relief to Raju, who had challenged the Keralam HC's order refusing to stay his conviction.

With the dismissal of his plea, the conviction recorded by the trial court and affirmed in appeal continues to operate, leaving him disqualified from Kerala Assembly membership as per the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Raju, a former Transport Minister and the lone legislator of the Janadhipathya Kerala Congress, had ceased to be an MLA from 3 January 2026, after the Nedumangad JFCM sentenced him to three years imprisonment.

In March, the Keralam HC declined to stay the conviction despite suspending the sentence, rendering Raju ineligible to contest.

The case dates back to 1990 when Australian Andrew Cervelli was arrested at Thiruvananthapuram airport for allegedly smuggling 61.5 grams of narcotic substances concealed in his underwear. *— PTI*

M'rashtra's Akola hottest in India at 46.9°C

NAGPUR, 27 APRIL

Akola in Maharashtra recorded the highest temperature in the country at 46.9°C, while Nagpur and several other parts of Vidarbha reeled under a severe heatwave, MeT officials said on Monday.

The prevailing high temperatures over Vidarbha can be attributed to an anticyclonic circulation over Maharashtra and adjoining areas. At the same time, hot and dry north westerly winds have been continuously affecting the region, he said.

Apart from that, weak western disturbances and the absence of moisture incursion or any significant weather systems have contributed to the intensification of heat over the region, the official said.

The India Metereology Department said heatwave conditions are likely to continue at a few places over the region till Tuesday.

A relief from the heat wave is expected thereafter and the mercury is likely to dip by 2 to 3 deg C, with the possibility of rains, it added.

A man splashes water on his face to get respite from the heat on a hot summer day, in Bikaner in Rajasthan *—PTI*

SCHOOL TIMINGS

Meanwhile, in Patna, the district administration restricted school timings up to 11.30am for students till class 8 in view of the heatwave.

The order, coming into effect on Monday, prohibits academic activities in all schools for students up to class 8 after 11.30am till Thursday.

In UP, Noida too has changed school timings.

KERALA SIZZLING

Large parts of Kerala continued to experience hot, humid weather, with several districts recording high temperatures. According to 24-hour data released by the IMD at 8.30am on Monday, northern Palakkad was the hottest place in the state, with the maximum temperature touching 40 degrees Celsius.

However, high humidity levels made conditions feel hotter than the actual temperature, especially during the day. *— PTI*

Scindia keeps onion in pocket to beat the heat

Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia shared an age-old remedy to beat the heat during summer by keeping an onion in his pocket.

He was addressing people at Pichhore-Shivpuri in Guna during a programme on Sunday. Scindia said he carried an onion, explaining it helps regulate body temperature in the heat, and pulled one from his pocket to everyone's surprise. While Scindia spoke, an elderly man in the crowd smiled and drew an onion from his pocket. *—PTI*

POWER CRISIS DUE TO WEST ASIA CONFLICT, SAYS KERALAM MINISTER

PALAKKAD, 27 APRIL

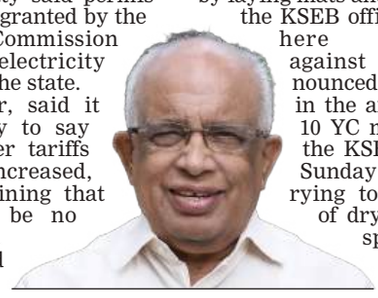
Keralam Electricity Minister K Krishnankutty attributed the power crisis in the state to an increase in electricity consumption triggered by LPG scarcity amid the conflict in West Asia.

The minister said the shortage of cooking gas has led to increased reliance on induction cookers, significantly pushing up power usage across the state.

Krishnankutty said permission has been granted by the Regulatory Commission to procure electricity from outside the state.

He, however, said it was too early to say whether power tariffs would be increased, while maintaining that there would be no load shedding.

He also said that efforts were being made to avoid a hike in electricity charges.



The Keralam State Electricity Regulatory Commission allowed KSEB to buy 250 MW daily till 15 May.

On April 17, Keralam's daily electricity consumption touched 116.11 million units, the highest recorded so far this month, while peak power demand reached an all-time high of 6,013 MW.

Meanwhile, Congress activists staged an unusual protest by laying mats and sleeping at the KSEB office in Olayil here protesting against the unannounced power cuts in the area. Around 10 YC men reached the KSEB office on Sunday night, carrying torches made of dry leaves and spread out mats. *— PTI*

J&K SCHOOL DECLARED 'UNLAWFUL' UNDER UAPA

SRINAGAR, 27 APRIL

A school allegedly run by individuals affiliated with a banned organisation in the Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir has been declared an "unlawful entity" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Anshul Garg issued a two-page order based on the dossier presented by the SSP of Shopian pointing towards the alleged illegal activities at the Darul Uloom Jamia Sirajul Uloom at Imam Sahib in Shopian. According to the order issued by Garg on 24 April, there were "credible inputs and evidence on record, to indicate sustained and covert linkages of the institution with the Jamaat-e-Islami, which the Government of India banned in 2019."

The order said there was a de facto control of the institution by individuals affiliated with the banned outfit, including their placement in key administrative positions. It said the institution, has fostered an environment conducive to radicalisation with its graduates found involved in militant activities.

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said the order declaring Dar Ul Uloom Jamia Siraj Ul Uloom in Shopian an unlawful entity under UAPA was "flagrant injustice." — PTI

Motorists throng Andhra fuel outlets

AMARAVATI, 27 APRIL

Thousands of motorists thronged retail fuel outlets in Andhra Pradesh on Monday, fearing shortage, even though the government assured that there would be "no shortage of petrol and diesel."

Several two-wheelers, cars, trucks and other vehicles were seen lined up at a petrol pump in Rajahmundry. People were also seen carrying plastic containers to buy petrol and diesel.

At a petrol bunk in Auto Nagar in Vijayawada, similar scenes played out with several vehicles lined up.

It was the same on Sunday afternoon at all the petrol pumps in Vijayawada's Ajit Singh Nagar and vicinity.

Gopala Krishna, a member of the fuel retailers association from Guntur, said the crisis has spread across the state.

Meanwhile, Polavaram district collector Dinesh Kumar issued a statement saying that "petrol and diesel supply is normal". He advised people not to resort to bulk purchase of fuel and called on them to pass on information in the event of a shortage.

Meanwhile, Transport Minister M Ram Prasad Reddy directed officials to ensure that transport services are not affected. *— PTI*

MARRIAGE FRAUD

Actress accused of 'duping' techie of Rs 9 cr

HYDERABAD, 27 APRIL

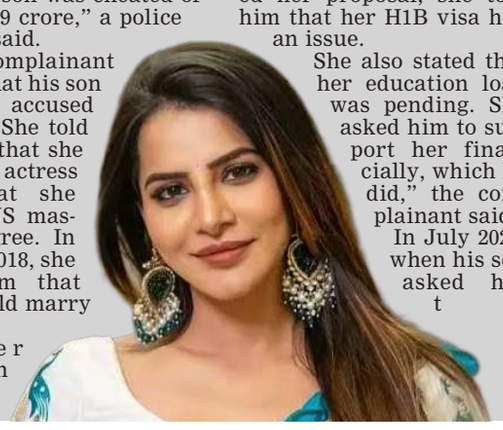
A case was registered against actress Ashu Reddy and her family for allegedly cheating a London-based software engineer of Rs 9.35 crore on the pretext of marriage, police said on Monday.

A 60-year-old man lodged a complaint with the Central Crime Station (CCS) alleging that his son was duped by the actress, following which a case was booked against her and her three family members on 20 April.

"The complainant alleged that his son was cheated of over Rs 9 crore," a police official said.

The complainant stated that his son met the accused in 2018. She told his son that she was an actress and that she had a US masters degree. In March 2018, she told him that she would marry him.

"After his son accepted her proposal, she told him that her H1B visa had an issue.



She also stated that her education loan was pending. She asked him to support her financially, which he did," the complainant said.

In July 2020, when his son asked her to arrange a meeting between both families for the marriage, she refused to marry him, the complainant said and added that when his son asked her to repay the money, she avoided him.

She finally agreed to return Rs 70 lakh and gave blank cheques, but she later tore them.

From 2020 to 2025, she repeatedly assured his son and family that she would marry him and she took large sums of money, the complainant alleged in his complaint submitted to the police. *— PTI*

Hansraj College suspends 30 students for 'misconduct'

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

The Hansraj College administration has suspended at least 30 students for reasons ranging from violence and misconduct during the college festival to being involved in "acts defaming the college through social media platforms."

The student union of the Delhi University college condemned the move and called for a protest on Monday to oppose the suspension notices.

The first letter was issued to Parth Srivastava, the former president of the student union, on 20 April.

The letter, which is uploaded on the college's website, said the student had been found involved in "acts of indiscipline, including defamation of the institution and use of derogatory language against teaching and non-teaching staff."

Srivastava, however, said he is being targeted.

Speaking to PTI, he referred to the protests in February against the wedding of the principal's son on campus.

"Following that, I had submitted an RTI application seeking info on irregularities in the college," Srivastava said, alleging that he got his suspension letter "not long after that." He added that he has already approached the Delhi High Court regarding the issue. *— PTI*

JUMBO SHOWER TIME

A caretaker showers Rajlakshmi, an Asian elephant, to beat the heat at the National Zoological Park, in New Delhi —*PTI*

Here's what the India-New Zealand FTA is all about

India and New Zealand on Monday signed a free trade agreement (FTA) to boost two-way commerce in goods and services and promote investments.

The pact will come into force on actually decided date agreed by both sides.

Here are a few questions and answers to understand the main strategic gain of this deal:

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal with New Zealand Minister of Trade and Investment Todd McClay during the signing of the India-New Zealand free trade agreement, in New Delhi *PTI*

WHAT'S AN FTA?

An economic arrangement between two or more countries where they agree either to end or significantly reduce customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them, besides cutting down barriers which can hinder or promote two-way commerce and investments.

INDIA-NEW ZEALAND FTA

Negotiations were first launched in 2010, stalled in 2015 after nine rounds, and were revived in March 2025.

- **16 March, 2025:** Negotiations resumed afresh
- **22 December, 2025:** Announced conclusion of talks
- **27 April, 2026:** FTA set to be signed
- The agreement covers 20 chapters, including trade in goods, rules of origin, services, customs and trade facilitation, SPS, TBT, trade remedies, dispute settlement and legal provisions.

BENEFITS FOR INDIA

All Indian goods, including labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, plastic items, leather and engineering goods, will enter at zero duty in New Zealand, whose average import tariff is just 2.3 per cent.

New Zealand has committed to invest (FDI) USD 20 billion over 15 years.

India has secured commitments across a wide range of high-value services sectors, including IT and IT-enabled services, professional services, education, financial services, tourism, construction and other business services.

The FTA Opens Skilled Employment Pathways through a new Temporary Employment Entry Visa pathway for Indian professionals in skilled occupations, with a quota of 5,000 visas at any given time and a stay of up to three years.

Duty-free wine and spirits exports from India, while wines from the Oceania country will enter the domestic market at a concessional duty, which will be reduced over a period of 10 years.

BENEFITS FOR NEW ZEALAND

India, following the template used in its trade agreement with Australia, has offered market access on 70 per cent of tariff lines (or product categories). The country will give duty-free access to 54.11 per cent of New Zealand exports from day one of the implementation of the free trade agreement, and include sheep meat, wool, coal and forestry and wood products, a move which is expected to make these items cheaper for Indians.

Duty concessions on agricultural goods like apples, kiwifruit, manuka honey, and albumins (including milk albumin), but with quotas and minimum import prices (MIP). Duties on several seafood items, such as mussels and salmon, will be eliminated over a period of seven years.

The levy will be removed on a number of iron, steel and scrap aluminium items over a period of 10 years or less.

Sensitive farm products, including apples, kiwifruit, manuka honey, and albumins (including milk albumin), are managed through tariff-rate quotas (TRQs), supported by minimum import prices (MIPs) and safeguard measures.

Further, the import duty on avocados and persimmons by India will be eliminated in 10 years.

SENSITIVE GOODS

To protect the interests of farmers and MSMEs, India has not extended any import duty concessions to New Zealand on several sensitive sectors, including dairy, animal products, vegetables, sugar, copper and aluminium.

Products that are kept in the exclusion list are: Dairy (milk, cream, whey, yoghurt, cheese), animal products (other than sheep meat), vegetable products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds), sugar, artificial honey, Animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils.

The list also includes Arms and Ammunition, Gems and Jewellery, Copper and Articles (Cathodes, Cartridges, Rods, Bars, Coils), Aluminium and articles thereof (Ingots, billets, wire bars).

IMPORTANCE FOR INDIA

For India, the agreement strengthens access to a high-income, rules-based Pacific market and supports its broader Indo-Pacific economic strategy. For New Zealand, it offers more secure entry into one of the world's fastest-growing large economies at a time of rising global trade uncertainty.

New Zealand's Indian diaspora of over 300,000 people - about 5 per cent of its population - provides a strong bridge for trade and investment. Easier visas, faster student pathways and lower education costs could further boost services trade.

BILATERAL TRADE

Bilateral merchandise trade stood at USD 1.3 billion (USD 711.1 million and imports 587.13 million) in 2024-25, while total trade in goods and services reached about USD 2.4 billion in 2024, with services trade alone reaching USD 1.24 billion, led by travel, IT, and business services.

India exports include aviation fuel, pharmaceuticals, motor vehicles, petroleum products, readymade garments, and machinery; while imports include wood and wood products, iron and steel, raw wool, dairy products, scrap metals, coal and farm-linked inputs. —*PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Attack on Don reflects rising political violence

For the third time in three years, Donald Trump has come under threat by an attacker. Many facts remain unclear after a gunman stormed the Washington Hilton on 25 April, during the White House Correspondents' Association dinner.

As the investigation into the shooting continues, Alfonso Serrano, The Conversation's politics and society editor, spoke with James Piazza, a political violence scholar at Penn State, about what is driving the rise of political violence in the US and what can be done about it.

President Donald Trump speaks in the James Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House after the shooting at the annual White House Correspondents' Association Dinner in Washington —*PTI*

This is not the first time Trump has faced political violence. What stands out after the latest attack?

I think the events of 25 April underscore how dangerous this political moment is in the United States. For the past several years – certainly since 6 January, 2021 – the US has been experiencing a period of increased political violence, which is generally defined as violence that is motivated by politics or is intended to communicate a political message or achieve a political objective.

Researchers at the Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab have documented that political violence has increased in the US in recent years. Several recent examples come to mind: the 6 January, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol building; multiple assassination attempts on President Trump; the deadly attacks on Minnesota lawmakers Melissa Hortman and John Hoffman that left Hortman and her husband dead; the attempted murder of Paul Pelosi; the assassination of Charlie Kirk. In my home state of Pennsylvania, Governor Josh Shapiro was targeted in an attack on the governor's mansion.

What's driving political violence?

There are several important drivers of political violence at work in the US today. The US is currently politically polarised. They are suspicious and hostile toward one another, and this produces a tense and volatile environment. This has produced a "zero-sum" environment in which every election and political contest is a "do or die" moment.

Each side views members of the other party not as merely having a different view on politics but rather as evil or immoral. The polarised environment has made political violence more normalised. It has also dampened public backlash against political violence.

Political rhetoric has become much more divisive and violent in nature. This works hand in hand with polarisation and helps to further normalise political violence. In particular, when politicians use demonising or dehumanising rhetoric to attack their opponents – for example, using words that depict their opponents as subhuman – this fosters extremism and helps motivate extremists to hurt their opponents physically.

Disinformation is also an important driver of political violence. A number of people who have engaged in recent acts of political violence seem to have been motivated by conspiracy theories and other forms of disinformation, often gleaned from social media. People are exposed to large amounts of disinformation and are hermetically sealed off from other sources that might challenge their worldview. This facilitates radicalisation and has been shown to fuel political violence in some cases.

Finally, I think an important factor is also the current assault on democratic norms and democratic institutions. US democracy is experiencing pressures that are unprecedented in the modern era. This has had a damaging effect on Americans' trust in government, confidence in democratic institutions and value for democratic rule itself.

My work shows that individuals who are skeptical about democracy are much more likely to express support or tolerance for political violence.

How does this moment of political violence stand out from other violent periods in US history – are we in uncharted waters?

While the US is currently experiencing an uptick in political violence, unfortunately it is not unprecedented. One example would be the highly polarised period in the 1850s in the run-up to the Civil War.

In this era, there was a sharp division between abolitionists and advocates of slavery. This culminated in political assassinations, an assault on an abolitionist member of Congress by a pro-slavery member of Congress, and a bloody civil conflict in Kansas between pro- and anti-slavery armed groups.

The early 1900s, right after World War I, saw another increase in political violence due to labour issues and violence by the second generation of the Ku Klux Klan.

Finally, the 1960s also saw a period of intense political violence surrounding opposition to the Vietnam War and backlash to the Civil Rights Movement.

Though there are some unique features about political violence today – namely the influence of social media – I think we can look for some parallels in these early periods of political violence.

I believe it is absolutely critical that both Democratic and Republican politicians unite to condemn this attack and all political violence.

Research amply shows that what political elites – politicians, political leaders, media commentators, online influencers – say in the wake of these sorts of events has a huge effect on citizens' attitudes.

If the message comes from across the political spectrum, it will be that much more effective at reducing public attitudes that nurture political violence. —*The Conversation*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

91 seats of 24 Parganas, Kolkata & Howrah may decide road to power

In West Bengal's electoral chessboard, governments are rarely made in the hills of North Bengal or the forested region of Jangalmahal. Power is usually decided in the crowded plains of South Bengal, where elections are won less by momentum and more by mathematics.

At the heart of that battle lie North and South 24 Parganas - the twin districts which, along with Kolkata and Howrah, form the TMC's strongest fortress and the BJP's most crucial gateway to power.

With the BJP seeking to breach the ruling party's southern citadel, the two biggest districts - North 24 Parganas with 33 seats and South 24 Parganas with 31- once again hold the key to Bengal's high-voltage electoral battle.

Together with Kolkata's 11 seats and Howrah's 16, these four districts account for 91 of Bengal's 294 assembly seats - nearly one-third of the House - making them the single most decisive belt in the 2026 polls.

North and South 24 Parganas remain the heart of that contest - what Bengal politicians often call the "Uttar Pradesh of Bengal's electoral map," the region that can make or unmake power at Nabanna, the state secretariat.

The larger Presidency division - Kolkata, Howrah, Nadia, North and South 24 Parganas - sends 111 MLAs to the Assembly and remains the TMC's strongest fortress.

Despite the BJP's most aggressive push during the 2021 assembly elections, the TMC won 96 of these 111 seats, while the BJP managed only 14 and the ISF one. The verdict reinforced an axiom: without breaking South Bengal, there is no route to power.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP improved its footprint and led in 21 of these segments, while the TMC stayed ahead in 90. But the geography barely changed - the BJP gained mainly in Nadia and North 24 Parganas, while South 24 Parganas, Howrah and Kolkata South stayed firmly with the ruling party.

For the TMC, the arithmetic is blunt: hold this belt and the road to a fourth straight term remains open.

This area had once been a stronghold of the Left. In 2006, the CPI(M)-led Left Front won 72 of the Presidency seats. But the Muslim consolidation post-Sachar Committee report, Singur-Nandigram aftershocks and Mamata Banerjee's rise turned the region into the TMC's political engine.

South 24 Parganas, along with Purba Medinipur, was among the first zilla parishads the TMC wrested from the Left in 2008. By 2011 and 2016, both

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee during a roadshow; Union Home Minister Amit Shah during a roadshow in support of BJP candidates amid the ongoing West Bengal Assembly elections, in Kolkata —*PTI*

24 Parganas had become the party's near-complete strongholds.

North 24 Parganas, however, remains the BJP's best southern hope.

Bordering Bangladesh and housing a large refugee population, it has a decisive Matua vote in at least 14 seats. The BJP's citizenship plank, built around CAA promises, helped it make deep inroads here in 2019 and retain relevance in 2021.

In 2021, the BJP's wins in the Presidency division were concentrated largely in Nadia and North 24 Parganas. In South 24 Parganas, Howrah and much of Kolkata, it failed to convert momentum into seats.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP led in 11 assembly segments in Nadia and eight in North 24 Parganas. In South 24 Parganas, it could not lead in any segment.

This time, however, another variable has altered calculations -- the Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

In 2021, nearly 65 to 70 constituencies across Bengal had winning margins so slender that a few booths could decide the winner. The epicentre lies in nearly 70 seats across 11 districts, with 25 in Kolkata and the adjoining belt of North 24 Parganas, Howrah and Hooghly. North 24 Parganas alone has 13 such closely fought seats.

North 24 Parganas lost over 12.6 lakh names, South 24 Parganas over 10.91 lakh, and Kolkata nearly 6.97 lakh during SIR deletions.

In Bongaon South, won by the BJP by around 2,000 votes, nearly 7,000 names were deleted. In Kalyani, another BJP-held seat won by roughly 2,000 votes, deletions touched around 9,000.

Of Kolkata's 16 seats, only Bhabanipur and Beleghata are estimated to have deletions lower than the previous victory margin. In every other constituency, deleted names exceed the winning margin.

That has turned voter rolls into a political battlefield. Both parties know that where margins are thinner than deleted names, SIR can change not just results, but the narrative itself.

That is why booth committees of the parties are being treated like war rooms. In North 24 Parganas, every Matua household is being revisited, every refugee colony mapped again, every deleted voter challenged.

Howrah and Kolkata add another layer. A BJP rise here gives narrative momentum; a TMC hold reinforces Mamata Banerjee's image of invincibility.

In 2021, the BJP believed Lok Sabha momentum would be enough to break Mamata Banerjee's southern fortress. Five years later, the lesson remains unchanged: without cracking North and South 24 Parganas, Kolkata and Howrah, there is no road to Nabanna.

The battle is now being fought less in speeches and more in booth lists, Matua colonies, minority belts and slender margins. Because in Bengal, governments are not decided by the biggest rallies but by who holds the south when the votes are finally counted. —*PTI*

Will do everything for W Asia's peace: Putin

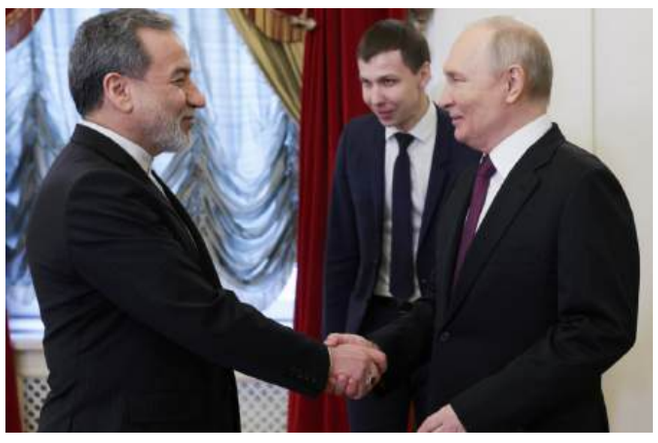
Iran's FM meets Russian Prez, blames US' excessive demands for failed talks

MOSCOW, 27 APRIL

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met Russian President Vladimir Putin in St Petersburg on Monday, discussing efforts to stabilise West Asia.

"Russia is ready to do everything in its power to ensure that peace in West Asia is achieved as soon as possible," Putin said.

Putin praised the Iranian people for fighting "bravely and heroically" for sovereignty. The meeting was also attended by Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, TASS reported. Araghchi said "excessive demands" by the United States had derailed ongoing peace negotiations, de-spite earlier progress in talks involving multiple regional actors. He added that consultations in Russia would focus on reviewing developments after the recent Iran–US–Israel conflict and assessing prospects for renewed diplomacy.



Iranian FM Abbas Araghchi meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin in St Petersburg on Monday—*TASS*

Araghchi said that the world witnessed Iran's strength in countering the US during the recent war, and that the Islamic Republic is a "stable and powerful establishment."

"With their courage, the Iranian people succeeded in resisting the US aggression and will be able to en-dure it," he said.

He said that it became clear that Iran has "great friends and allies" like Russia, and conveyed "warmest greetings" from Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei and President Masoud Pezeshkian to the Russian leader.

The Iranian minister arrived in Russia after visiting Pakistan and Oman as part of a broader regional dip-lomatic tour. In Pakistan, he met senior leadership including Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, de-scribing the discussions as "successful" and "productive". In Oman, he held talks with Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, focusing on security in Hormuz and efforts to reduce regional tensions. —*PTI*

US turns back 38 ships to Iran ports

US Central Command (CENTCOM) has announced that US forces are maintaining a strict maritime restrictive operation in the region, continuing to enforce a blockade against Iranian ports. These forces are preventing ships from entering or exiting Iranian waters as part of a sustained effort to control movement into strategic coastal hubs. This comes as military closely monitors maritime traffic to ensure compliance with the ongoing restrictions.

"American forces have directed 38 ships to turn around or return to port." Against the backdrop of a persistent deadlock in Tehran-Washington peace negotiations, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Russia on Monday for a meeting with President Vladimir Putin. —*PTI*

Largest condom makers raise prices

Karex, the world's largest condom manufacturer, raised prices by 30 per cent, citing costs from the closure of the—vital petrochemical conduit— Strait of Hormuz. Karex's customers must now pay for the rising costs for its condoms, lubricants, and catheters. The Malaysian firm, which produces 5 billion condoms annually, believes demand will rise by 30 per cent this year as "people use more condoms during times of uncertainty," said CEO Goh Miah Kiat.

Hezbollah chief rejects direct talks with Israel following IDF strikes

BEIRUT, 27 APRIL

Hezbollah Chief Naim Qassem on Monday reiterated refusal for in direct negotiations with Israel, reported Al Jazeera. Meanwhile, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) targeted "imminent threats" in Southern Lebanon on Sunday.

"IDF soldiers identified and eliminated three terrorists where IDF soldiers were operating, the IDF said in a statement. The IDF also reported secondary explosions. "In addition, several Hezbollah military structures were struck.

Meanwhile, on Sunday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asserted that the ceasefire arrangement was being undermined by Hezbollah, warning that Israel will continue to respond with force.

Qassem said direct talks remain "out of the question", stressing continued resistance against Israeli "aggression". "We will not give up our weapons", he reportedly said.

Qassem also criticised the Lebanese government for rushing into an unnecessary concession, and we categorically reject direct negotiations with Israel. They must halt them and pursue an indirect path instead." —*ANI*

China opposes US sanction on refinery

China on Monday said it opposed a decision by the United States to sanction one of its refineries for purchasing Iranian crude oil shipments.

The US announced Friday it would sanction Hengli Petrochemicals in China's northeastern port city of Dalian.

The measure blocks the company and others that transport Iranian oil from accessing the US financial system.

Hengli Petrochemicals is among the dozens of Chinese buyers of Iran's oil. China is Iran's largest overall customer for oil. —*PTI*

Piracy threat level raised as 2nd ship hijacked in Somalia

MOGADISHU, 27 APRIL

Maritime authorities have increased a piracy threat level off Somalia to "substantial", with a second cargo vessel hijacked. The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) confirmed the incident, stating that "unauthorised persons have taken control of a cargo vessel which has been redirected within territorial waters." The vessel was seized six nautical miles from Garacad, Somalia, following a previous hijack on Tuesday, when a tanker was boarded 45 nautical miles north-east of Mareeyo. UKMTO reports an "increased threat" of pirate activity and advises all merchant ships to "transit with caution." The Joint Maritime Information Center (JMIC) has upgraded its threat level to "substantial" and urges crews to remain vigilant, noting that "a pirate action group is active in the Somali Basin." —*PTI*

6.1 magnitude earthquake strikes northern Japan

TOKYO, 27 APRIL

A preliminary magnitude 6.1 earthquake struck northern Japan early Monday, reported by the US Geological Survey. The quake occurred 18km west of Sarabetsu, Hokkaido, at a depth of 81 kilometres. The USGS confirmed there were no immediate reports of injuries or damage. The tremor follows a 7.7 magnitude quake last week that triggered a brief tsunami alert and heightened risk for a megaquake along Japan's coast. Authorities continue to monitor seismic activity, and residents are advised to remain cautious. The recent quake underscores ongoing seismic risks in the region, with experts warning that Japan remains vulnerable to powerful aftershocks and further tremors.—*PTI*

—SCRENGRAB

N Korea memorial for troops killed in Russia-Ukraine war

SEOUL, 27 APRIL

North Korea unveiled a memorial museum honouring soldiers who fought alongside Russia in Ukraine, in Pyongyang. The museum remembers North Korean troops involved in the 2025 operation near Kursk, where an about 2,000 troops died. Kim Jong Un attended the ceremony, calling the fallen symbols of heroism. He praised joint efforts to thwart Western "hegemonic plots" and pledged full support for Russia's sovereignty. Russian officials, including Defence Minister Andrei Beloussov and reportedly discussed military cooperation plans for 2027-2031. President Vladimir Putin sent a congratulatory letter, emphasising "friendship and solidarity" between the nations.—*PTI*

Pope meets 1st woman Archbishop of Canterbury

VATICAN CITY, 27 APRIL

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally, arrived at the Vatican for her first foreign visit since becoming the first woman leader of the Church of England. Mullally met Pope Leo XIV in his library, with plans for a prayer session in the Urban VIII Chapel in the Apostolic Palace. Her four-day pilgrimage includes visits to basilicas and meetings with Vatican officials. The purpose is to strengthen Anglican–Roman Catholic relations through prayer, encounter, and dialogue. Mullally's appointment has sparked division within the Anglican Communion, especially over the ordination of women. Leo congratulated her, acknowledging challenges but reaffirming commitment to dialogue. Their exchange marks an ongoing ecumenical efforts aimed to bridge differences, with historic ties dating back to the 1960s.—*PTI*

WH GALA SCARE

I wasn't worried, just curious: Trump on shooting

WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

US President Donald Trump said he was more curious than concerned when Secret Service rushed him out of the White House Correspondents' Association dinner after gunfire erupted at the Washington Hilton hotel.

In an interview with CBS, Trump described the chaotic moments on Saturday night when shots were fired in the hotel foyer, one floor above the basement ballroom where the event was being held.

"I wasn't worried. I understand life. We live in a crazy world," he said, adding that his curiosity may have slowed the evacuation. "I wanted to see what was happening

Trump recalled being surrounded by security who instructed him to get down as they escorted him out. So I went down and the first lady went down also," he said, referring to Melania Trump.

The president, the First Lady and Vice-President JD Vance were all evacuated from the venue. Video circulating online showed agents moving Vance moments before Trump, prompting questions over the timing.

Speaking later with Fox News, Trump said the suspect had "a lot of hatred in his heart" and a manifesto, suggesting he was "strongly anti-Christian".

Trump urged organisers to reschedule the dinner within 30 days, saying it should not be cancelled. —*PTI*

I DIDN'T RAPE ANYBODY, NOT A PAEDOPHILE: TRUMP LASHES OUT

WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

US President Donald Trump on Sunday denied allegations referenced in a gunman's manifesto, saying he was "not a rapist" or "a paedophile".

Speaking to CBS News, Trump reacted angrily when asked about statements made by the suspect accused of opening fire at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in Washington. The attacker, Cole Tomas Allen, 31, of California, accused Trump of being a "paedophile, rapist, and traitor".

Trump called the interviewer a "horrible person" for raising the issue. "I'm not a rapist... I didn't rape anybody. I'm not a paedophile. You read that from some sick person," he said, adding that he had been "totally exonerated" and wrongly linked to allegations unrelated to him.

He also claimed political opponents were connected to disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein, rejecting any association himself.

Trump has previously been found liable for sexual abuse in a civil case, though he has not been criminally convicted. In late 2025 and early 2026, released FBI files revealed secret investigations into alleged misconduct involving Trump and Epstein, including a 1990 oral rape allegation and a 2019 interview regarding the alleged abuse of a 13-year-old girl in the 1990s. —*ANI*

KIN OF LATE VIRGINIA ASK KING CHARLES TO MEET EPSTEIN'S VICTIMS

WASHINGTON, 27 APRIL

The visit of the UK's King Charles III to Washington on Monday to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence and the 'special US -UK relationship' comes at a time when family members of Jeffrey Epstein survivors have made a fresh request for a meeting with the King.

Ahead of the King's visit the family members of **Virginia Giuffre** — one of Epstein's victims who allegedly died from suicide — and other survivors sought a meeting to express solidarity and underline systematic failures. They have been advocating for a public inquiry into allegations made by women in the UK against the paedophile financier.

Giuffre's brother Sky Roberts said that the family members of the victims and survivors of Epstein would request for a 10-minute meeting with him and to show him that they are 'real people' with 'real feelings.'

Earlier, a BBC probe exposed how Epstein continued to keep women in flats across London for years. The expose was done after the Metropolitan Police failed to investigate Giuffre's 2015 allegations against Epstein. Giuffre's family have strongly opposed any clemency for Ghislaine Maxwell, currently serving a 20-year sentence.

If royal sources are to be believed, the King is unlikely to meet the survivors. Citing the ongoing police investigations into the matter by the UK police, as well as "constitutional reasons" to foreclose any possibility of an interaction with the family members of the King. —*Agencies*

Separatist forces capture North Mali town of Kidal

DAKAR, 27 APRIL

Separatists' forces fighting for an independent state in Northern Mali have claimed control of the northern town of Kidal after they attacked the country's defence Sadio Camara at his residence. The militants linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group were also reportedly involved in the attack.

According to the government statement, Camara's residence was targeted by a suicide car bomber and other attackers on Saturday.

"He engaged in an exchange of fire with the assailants, some of whom he managed to neutralise," it said. "During intense clashes, he was wounded and then transported to the hospital, where he unfortunately succumbed to his injuries."

The attacks were one of the biggest coordinated attacks on Mali's army in the capital, Bamako, and several other cities and towns. The assault also challenged Mali's security partner, Russia, which has

forces on the ground in the West African country. The government said Sunday the attacks appear to be over, but several questions remain, including who was in control of a key northern city that the separatists claim to have taken. The government has not provided a death toll from Saturday.

A spokesperson for the separatist Tuareg-led Azawad Liberation Front, or FLA, Mohamed El Maouloud Ramadan said the Russian Africa Corps troops and the Malian military withdrew from Kidal after an agreement was reached for their peaceful exit. "Kidal is declared free," he said.

Following the attacks, a three-day overnight curfew, from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m., was also announced for the Bamako district. —*PTI*

Clashes over water leave 42 dead in Eastern Chad

N'DJAMENA, 27 APRIL

At least 42 people have been killed in eastern Chad following clashes between two families over a water point, the Deputy Prime Minister said on Sunday. Limane Mahamat, during a visit to Igote, near the Sudan border, confirmed the toll and reported 10 injured, who were evacuated to for medical treatment.

Mahamat stated that the reprisal cycle spread over a large area, prompting military intervention. He added that "swift response" by the army helped contain the clashes keeping the situation "under control." The government announced a 'customary mediation' process and judicial proceedings to establish criminal responsibility.

Intercommunal conflicts over resources are common in Chad; last year, clashes between farmers and herders in the southwest resulted in 42 deaths and the burning of homes. Mahamat assured that the government will take "necessary measures" to prevent destabilisation.

Chad's eastern provinces have recently hosted refugees fleeing the Sudanese conflict, increasing pressure on resources and security. In February, Chad closed its border, to limit conflict spread after fighters from warring Sudanese factions crossed into its territory. —*PTI*

ANOTHER HATE CRIME

Sikh man beaten in Canada, told 'get out of my country'

TORONTO, 27 APRIL

An elderly Sikh man has been assaulted by a youth who yelled racist slurs that 'get out of my country' in Canada, prompting police to investigate the 'hate-motivated assault', authorities said.

The incident took place on 22 April in Woodstock, Ontario, and the youth is facing multiple charges for his actions, the Woodstock Police said in a statement.

The attack happened when the elderly man was walking along a sidewalk when he was approached by a youth who shoved him, it said.

Videos of the youth repeatedly shouting racist abuse, including, 'What the... are you doing in my country?' have been posted online—*SCREENGRAB*

Police said that the youth targeted the victim based on his ethnicity and yelled racially charged comments and obscenities. The victim was not physically injured, it added.

"Acts of hate have no place in our community. The Woodstock Police Service is committed to ensuring all members of the community feel safe and protected. We encourage anyone who has experienced or witnessed a hate-motivated incident to report it to police," police said.

Following the incident, the youth jumped a fence into the Turtle Island School property before exiting the school area. No students were harmed during the incident, the statement added.

"As a result of the investigation, the youth was arrested following the hate-motivated assault. The accused was held in custody for a bail hearing," it said.

Meanwhile, in a statement posted to X, the World Sikh Organisation (WSO) said it is 'deeply concerned' regarding the incident and calls the assault "unacceptable." The organisation thanked the Woodstock police for their quick response. —*PTI*

Rupee rises to 94.15 against USD

MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

The rupee settled on a flat note, registering gains of just one paisa to close at 94.15 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, as rising global uncertainty, escalating West Asia conflict and soaring crude oil prices weighed on investor sentiments. Forex traders said the INR/USD pair pared its initial losses, but the overall bias remains negative as FII sell-off and elevated crude oil prices restricted the gains for the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 94.25 against the US dollar, and touched an intraday high of 94.11 and a low of 94.28 against the greenback during the day. Meanwhile, the dollar index was down 0.21 per cent at 98.32.—*PTI*

Sun Pharma acquires Organon for $ 11.75B

Sun Pharma's shares rise over 7% after announcement, valuation at Rs 27,306 cr

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd will acquire US-based Organon & Co in an all-cash deal at an enterprise valuation of USD 11.75 billion in one of the largest acquisitions by Indian firms overseas.

The company has signed a definitive agreement under which Sun Pharma will acquire all outstanding shares of Organon for USD 14 per share in an all-cash transaction with an enterprise valuation of USD 11.75 billion.

Shares of Sun Pharma climbed by 7 per cent after the announcement.

Its shares jumped by 7.03 per cent to settle at Rs 1,733.80 on the BSE. At the NSE, the stock surged 6.97 per cent to end at Rs 1,733.50.

Sun Pharma will acquire all outstanding shares of Organon for USD 14 per share in a all-cash transaction –*FREEPIK*

The company's market valuation edged higher by Rs 27,306.64 crore to Rs 4,15,986.90 crore.

Organon is a global healthcare company formed through a spinoff from Merck, known as MSD in 2021. It has six manufacturing facilities across the European Union and emerging markets.

Sun Pharma is poised to be among the top 25 global pharmaceutical companies with a combined revenue of USD 12.4 billion, the company said.

Sun Pharma executive chairman Dilip Shanghvi said, "Organon's portfolio, capabilities and global reach are highly complementary to our own, and we believe that bringing the two organisations together can create a stronger and more diversified platform."

Sun Pharma will have a presence in 150 countries, with 18 large markets, each generating over USD 100 million in revenues. The combined business will unlock several vectors of value creation with potential synergies of over USD 350 million in 2-4 years.

The transaction has been approved by the boards of directors of both Sun Pharma and Organon and is expected to close in early 2027 subject to customary closing conditions, including receipt of required regulatory approvals and approval by Organon stockholders.

Sun Pharma had acquired Ranbaxy for USD 4 billion and Israel's Taro Pharmaceutical Industries for USD 454 million. —*PTI*

–*PTI*

Silver rises to Rs 2.50L/kg, gold at Rs 1.56L/10gm

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Silver prices rebounded by Rs 3,500 to Rs 2.50 lakh per kg in the national capital on Monday, while gold edged higher to Rs 1.56 lakh per 10 grams amid fresh buying by jewellers and retailers. The white metal had closed at Rs 2,47,000 per kg in the previous session. According to the All India Sarafa Association, gold of 99.9 per cent purity gained Rs 200 to Rs 1,56,100 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). "Gold traded steady on Monday as markets navigated mixed global cues," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, both spot gold and silver traded at USD 4,704 and 75.60 per ounce, respectively. —*PTI*

Cleartrip enters train ticketing through IRCTC

MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

Online travel platform Cleartrip, a Flipkart company, on Monday entered the train ticket booking segment through a partnership with the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), aiming to capture a single-digit market share. With this launch, travellers can access train ticket bookings across routes in India, including General and Tatkal quotas as prescribed by the Ministry of Railways guidelines, alongside essential services such as real-time seat availability, fare insights, PNR status tracking, berth preferences, and secure digital payments, all in a single, intuitive interface. "With over 800 million reserved passengers travelling by train every year, the opportunity isn't just about scale, it's about delivering a differentiated experience," Gaurav Patwari, Chief Business Officer, Air, Cleartrip —*PTI*

SENSEX JUMPS 639 PTS

Markets bounce back after three-day decline

MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

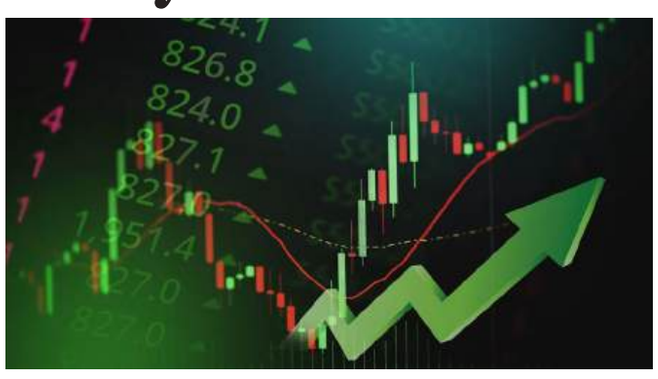
Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded nearly 1 per cent on Monday, snapping the three-day falling streak following a rally in Reliance Industries and Sun Pharma and positive global trends.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 639.42 points or 0.83 per cent to settle at 77,303.63. During the day, it surged 755.83 points or 0.98 per cent to 77,420.04.

The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 194.75 points or 0.81 per cent to close at 24,092.70.

Among the 30-Sensex firms, Sun Pharma jumped 7 per cent after it announced the acquisition of US-based Organon & Co in an all-cash deal at an enterprise valuation of USD 11.75 billion, one of the largest overseas buyouts by Indian firms.

Reliance Industries jumped 2.88 per cent. Adani Ports, Tech Mahindra, Mahindra & Mahindra, NTPC, HCL Tech and Tata Consultancy Services were also among the major



WORLD MARKETS

DOW (US)	49,251.70	(0.16%)
S&P 500 (US)	7,201.25	(0.08 %)
Nasdaq (US)	24,836.60	(1.63%)
Nikkei (Japan)	60,537.36	(1.38%)
Hang Seng (China)	25,925.66	(0.20%)
DAX (Germany)	24,272.25	(0.59%)
FTSE 100 (UK)	10, 391.52	(0.12%)
CAC 40 (Paris)	8,202.40	(0.02%)
KOSPI S Korea	6,615.03	(0.12%)

1.35 per cent. Among sectoral indices utilities surged the most by 2.50 per cent, followed by healthcare (2.43 per cent), focused IT (2.41 per cent), realty (2.35 per cent), IT (2.20 per cent), power (2.05 per cent) and services (1.92 per cent).

A total of 3,075 stocks advanced, while 1,288 declined and 193 remained unchanged on the BSE.

US markets ended higher on Friday.Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth Rs 8,827. 87 crore. —*PTI*

Brent crude surges 2% as Iran tension escalates

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Brent crude climbed nearly 2 per cent to USD 107.28 per barrel on Monday, while West Texas Intermediate (WTI) gained 1.5 per cent to USD 95.78 per barrel. The jump comes as US-Iran ceasefire talks hit a standstill, with tensions keeping oil tankers from transiting the Strait of Hormuz to deliver crude from the Persian Gulf to customers worldwide.

On Saturday, US President Donald Trump cancelled a trip by his envoys—including Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner—who were scheduled to meet Iranian leaders in Pakistan.

Posting on Truth Social, Trump explained, "Nobody knows who is in charge (in Iran)." He added that the US "has all the cards" and urged Iran to initiate contact directly if it wants talks.

The cancellation followed a visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araghchi on Saturday for discussions with Pakistani leaders.

Two West Asian officials said Iran is offering to end its chokehold over the Strait while sidestepping its nuclear program and requesting that the US end its blockade of Iran. Trump is unlikely to support the proposal. —*AN*

The stake sale is NSE's strategy to align with PNGRB guidelines –*FREEPIK*

NSE sells 1% stake in Indian Gas Exchange

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

- The stake sale is part of NSE's strategy to align with Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) guidelines, which restrict any single entity from holding more than 25 per cent in an exchange. Following the dilution, NSE's shareholding in IGX has

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has divested approximately 1 per cent of its stake in Indian Gas Exchange (IGX), India's first online delivery-based natural gas trading platform, to comply with regulatory norms, sources said on Monday.

The stake sale is part of NSE's strategy to align with Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) guidelines, which restrict any single entity from holding more than 25 per cent in an exchange.

Following the dilution, NSE's shareholding in IGX has reduced to 25 per cent. The exchange had acquired a 26 per cent stake in IGX for over Rs 19 crore in March 2021, becoming a co-promoter after securing PNGRB approval.

Earlier this month, NSE announced a partnership with IGX to introduce exchange-traded derivatives based on domestic natural gas prices.

The collaboration aims to launch natural gas futures contracts linked to IGX's benchmark Gas IndeX of India (GIXI), reflecting actual trade prices on the platform. IGX is also preparing to go public.

In January, the exchange revealed plans to launch an initial public offering (IPO) by December 2026, with draft papers expected to be filed with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in the second quarter.

IEX had confirmed that its board approved the IPO process, involving shares with a face value of Rs 10, subject to market conditions and regulatory clearances. —*PTI*

Axis Bank fall 5% post earnings

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Shares of Axis Bank declined nearly 5 per cent on Monday after its March quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.

The stock dropped 4.76 per cent to Rs 1,301 on the BSE. At the NSE, the stock edged lower by 4.83 per cent to Rs 1,299.90.

Axis Bank's consolidated net profit for the March quarter inched up 1.89 per cent to Rs 7,631.72 crore, as the lender set aside Rs 2,001 crore towards the potential impact of the West Asia war on its loan book.

The bank's net profit for the March quarter fell to Rs 7,071.31 crore from Rs 7,117.50 crore in the year-ago period. —*PTI*

Jefferies maintains buy on Paytm with Rs 1,350 target

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Global brokerage Jefferies has reiterated its "Buy" rating on Paytm (One 97 Communications Ltd), asserting that the company's growth engine and profitability will remain unaffected despite regulatory action against its associate, Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL).

The firm maintained its price target of Rs 1,350, indicating an 18 per cent upside.

In its latest report, Jefferies stated that Paytm had already undertaken comprehensive structural reforms over the past two years following the regulator's 2024 restrictions

on PPBL.

These include shutting down the wallet business tied to the bank, migrating UPI handles to other partner banks, terminating inter-company agreements, and writing off investments in the banking entity. It expects Paytm to deliver a revenue of 22 per cent.—*PTI*

PAYTM SHARES TANK OVER 8%

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Shares of One97 Communications, owner of the Paytm brand, plummeted over 8 per cent on Monday following the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) announcement that it was cancelling Paytm Payments Bank's licence for non-compliance with norms.

The RBI stated that the bank's affairs were conducted in a manner detrimental to the interests of depositors. The stock fell 8.37 per cent to Rs 1,051.05 on the BSE and 8.38 per cent to Rs 1,051.10 on the NSE.

Later, the share price quoted at Rs 1,112.50 on BSE and Rs 1,114.95 on NSE. —*PTI*

NTPC-GE to operate Vedanta plant

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Nearly two weeks after a blast at Vedanta's power plant in Chhattisgarh killed 25 workers, Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal said the plant's operations and maintenance (O&M) were entrusted entirely to NGSL, a joint venture between National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) and general Electric (GE).

He stated, "What weighs heavily on my mind is this: at our Athena plant, we had put in place the highest standards of safety.

The entire responsibility was entrusted to NGSL, a partnership between NTPC and GE, among the most respected and trusted institutions in India. Contractors and teams were of NGSL. —*PTI*

MakeMyTrip, Adani to launch pre-booking service

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL) and MakeMyTrip on Monday announced a partnership to enable international travellers browse and pre-book duty-free products on the travel booking platform before departure or arrival at Adani-managed airports. AAHL operates duty-free outlets across Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Mangaluru, Jaipur and Thiruvanantha puram.

When travellers decide purchases in advance, the companies can cut time spent inside airport retail zones and drive higher co Travellers can now browse and reserve items across over 10 categories, spanning over 100 brands and 14,000 stock keeping units through the MakeMyTrip.—*Agencies*

Basmati rice exporters urge govt action on shipping cost

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Basmati Rice Farmers & Exporters Development Forum (BRFEDF) called on the government on Monday to take urgent action against the "arbitrary and opaque shipping charges" that have made commercial exports unviable for many traders.

According to the forum, war-risk surcharges range from USD 800 to USD 6,000 per container and are frequently imposed without notice or changed after shipments are already underway.

In some cases, cumulative charges have reached 60 to 70 per cent of the cargo value. "Exporters are asked to absorb financial liability for circumstances entirely beyond their control," Forum Chairperson Priyanka Mittal said in a statement.

Mittal noted that smaller exporters have been hit hard-

est, as large carriers hold far more bargaining power, leaving traders with little recourse.

The forum acknowledged that India's Directorate General of Shipping had formally logged exporter grievances and demanded that the ministry link charges strictly to services rendered without tying returns to disputed fees.

The West Asia crisis has prompted shipping lines to divert cargo without clarity on onward movement and in return containers. —*PTI*

MISSION PROFIT OR NON-PROFIT?

Musk, Altman face-off in court over OpenAI

OAKLAND, 27 APRIL

Technology tycoons **Elon Musk** and **Sam Altman** are poised to face off in a high-stakes trial revolving around the alleged betrayal and unbridled ambition that blurred the bickering billionaires' once-shared vision for the development of artificial intelligence.

The trial, which is scheduled to begin Monday with jury selection, centres on the 2015 birth of ChatGPT maker OpenAI as a non-profit startup primarily funded by Musk before evolving into a capitalistic venture now valued at USD 852 billion.

The trial's outcome could sway the balance of power in AI, a breakthrough technology that is increasingly being feared as a potential job killer and an existential threat to humanity's survival.

Those perceived risks are among the reasons that Musk cites for filing an August 2024 lawsuit that will now be decided by a jury and US District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers in Oakland, California.

The civil lawsuit accuses Altman, OpenAI's CEO, and his top lieutenant, Greg Brockman, of double-crossing Musk by straying from the San Francisco company's founding mission to be an altruistic steward of a revolutionary technology. The lawsuit alleges they shifted into a money-making mode behind his back.

OpenAI said Musk's allegations are aimed at undercutting its rapid growth and bolstering Musk's own xAI.

Musk, who invested about USD 38 million in OpenAI, had sought USD 100 billion in damages.

Musk is now seeking an unspecified amount of money to be paid to fund the altruistic efforts of OpenAI's charitable arm by OpenAI's for-profit operations and Microsoft, the company's biggest investor.

Musk's lawsuit also seeks Altman's ouster from OpenAI's board.

Musk was held liable by a jury for defrauding investors during his USD 44 billion acquisition of Twitter in 2022. —*PTI*

RBI TO AUCTION GOVT SECURITIES

MUMBAI, 27 APRIL

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will conduct an auction of State Government Securities (SGS) worth Rs 14,500 crore on Tuesday, 28 April. Successful bidders must complete payment by Wednesday, 29 April, with consequent payments paid semi-annually.

Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand will offer fresh and re-issued securities with tenors of 3 to 23 years, auctioned based on yield or by price for most re-issuances.

The auction will be conducted electronically through the Core Banking Solution.—*ANI*

-PTI

Rugby to have inaugural women's edition in June

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Rugby Premier League (RPL) will have its inaugural women's edition in June with four franchise teams competing, the organisers announced on Monday.

Four of the six men's teams that competed in the RPL in 2025 will also field women's teams when the league is held from June 16-28 at Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad.

The four teams are Chennai Bulls (owned by Avid Sys Sports), Delhi Redz (RMZ Corp), Mumbai Dreamers (Dream Sports), and Kolkata Banga Tigers (Hunch Ventures).

GMR Sports, in partnership with Rugby India, is organising the league.

The player draft and auction for the four women's teams and six men's teams, including Hyderabad Heroes and Bengaluru Bravehearts.—*PTI*

Indian rider Johann clinches Qatar Superstock title

DOHA, 27 APRIL

Johann Emmanuel has become the first Indian to win the Qatar Superstock 600 Championship (QSTK) by topping both races in the postponed final round here.

The 19-year-old Chennai-based Johann, trailing championship leader Marton Belleli from Hungary by nine points going into the weekend's double-header, needed to win both races to seal the title, and he delivered stunningly.

Qualifying second, Johann won both races, withstanding immense pressure to clinch the championship with a 21-point advantage. He finished the season with six wins out of 10 races.—*PTI*

Sindhu begins her journey as BWF Council member

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Two-time Olympic medallist P. V. Sindhu has promised to represent the voices of the shuttlers from across the globe in her tenure as Badminton World Federation (BWF) Council member, a rare role for an active player.

One of the most accomplished players in the sport's history, Sindhu has assumed a full voting position on the BWF Council following her election as Chair of the BWF Athletes' Commission in December.

After completing the formal vetting process, Sindhu officially entered the BWF Council at the end of 2025.

She made her first appearance before the global badminton membership during the Annual General Meeting here on April 25, marking the beginning of her tenure.—*PTI*

-PTI

Pranavi finishes T-24 at Women's SA Open

CAPE TOWN, 27 APRIL

Pranavi Urs carded 1-under 72 to finish as the top-Indian at tied-24th in the Investec SA Women's Open golf tournament, even as compatriot Diksha Dagar (76) slipped on the final day here. Pranavi and Diksha finished T-24th and T-37th, respectively, while Avani Prashanth (77) was T-57th. Three other Indians in the fray, Vani Kapoor, Tvesa Malik, and Hitaashee Bakshi, had missed the halfway cut.Meanwhile, England's Esme Hamilton earned her maiden LET title with a two-shot victory. Hamilton fired a final round 71 (-2) to beat Cara Gainer and Pia Babnik for the title following an epic battle with compatriot Cara Gainer.—*PTI*

Hazlewood, Bhuvneshwar help B'luru crush Delhi

Virat has become the first batter in history to score 9,000 IPL runs

NEW DELHI, 27 APRIL

Virat Kohli has become the first batter in history to score 9,000 IPL runs, in the IPL 2026 clash between Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and Delhi Capitals (DC) in Delhi on Monday.

Royal Challengers Bengaluru rode a storm of sheer pace fury to annihilate Delhi Capitals by nine wickets in their IPL clash here on Monday, after unleashing a powerplay spell so vicious that it virtually ended the contest within the first three overs.

It was carnage of the highest order, a powerplay ambush so brutal that the Delhi Capitals never quite recovered as RCB unleashed a devastating new-ball spell to script one of the most dramatic openings in IPL history.

Josh Hazlewood (4/12) and Bhuvneshwar Kumar (3/5) turned the powerplay into a demolition act, ripping through Delhi with two ruthless three-over bursts that left the hosts gasping at 13 for six.

Only Abhishek Porel (30), David Miller (19) and Kyle Jamieson (12) reached double-digit scores. The home team scored eight fours and a six.

Virat Kohli is celebrating a wicket, Hazlewood joined the elite list of Indian players -X/@IPL

All Delhi could manage was 75 in 16.3 overs, but eventually deflected the ignominy of posting the lowest IPL score. RCB had managed 49 in 2017 against the Kolkata Knight Riders.

Chasing a modest target, RCB openers Virat Kohli (23) and Jacob Bethell (20) ensured a smooth start.

There were no hiccups except that Bethell was done in by an exceptional catch by T Natarajan off Kyle Jamieson.

Devdutt Padikkal scored a fluent 34 as some solid RCB batting took the game away from Delhi in no time.

Brief Score:

DC: 75 all-out in 16.3 overs (Abishek Porel 30; Bhuvneshwar Kumar 3/5, Josh Hazlewood 4/12).

RCB: 77 for 1 in 6.3 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 34; Kyle Jamieson 1/42). —*PTI*

Given out for obstructing the field, Raghuvanshi cops a fine for outburst

Kolkata Knight Riders batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi was on Monday fined 20 per cent of his match fee for his emotional outburst after being given out for obstructing the field during his side's IPL match against Lucknow Super Giants here. "Angkrish Raghuvanshi, batter & wicket-keeper, Kolkata Knight Riders, has been fined 20% of his match fee and has also accumulated one Demerit Point for breaching Level 1 of the IPL's Code of Conduct for Players and Team Officials during Match No. 38 against Lucknow Super Giants," read an IPL statement. "Raghuvanshi was found to have breached Article 2.2 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which relates to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings during a Match."The incident occurred in the fifth over, when, after being given out for 'obstructing the field', Raghuvanshi struck the boundary cushion with his bat in an aggressive manner and subsequently threw his helmet into the dugout. Raghuvanshi admitted to the offence and accepted the Match Referee's sanction.

-PTI

Super Over: Langer defends sending out-of-form Pooran

LUCKNOW, 27 APRIL

Lucknow Super Giants head coach Justin Langer defended sending out-of-form Nicholas Pooran to face Kolkata Knight Riders' star spinner Sunil Narine in the Super Over of their IPL match, saying the team management thought the explosive West Indian batter was the best option despite his lean run.

Pooran, who has laboured for runs this IPL season with 22 being his highest, got out first ball, bowled by Narine, and LSG ended up at 1 for 2 in the Super Over. KKR needed just one ball to win the match.

"Good question. We knew that Sunil Narine had bowled it, and if you look at Nicky's (Nicholas Pooran) record, he's seen Sunil Narine more than anyone in world cricket. So we felt that he was still the best option," Langer said at the post-match press conference.

"I know he hasn't hit his form yet, and Nicky will be the first to admit that, but we thought if anyone can handle a Super Over, it's Nicky Pooran. You back your best players. He has struggled, but if you look at all the numbers, no one plays Narine, the world-class off-spinner, better than Nicky. It didn't come off, unfortunately," he added.

"There's probably no greater T20 player (than Pooran) currently in the world over the last few years. It just goes to show he's human, and you can't fake confidence. We all try to. You can look confident, but confidence comes from getting your processes right," Langer said.

LSG captain Rishabh Pant had also defended the choice of Pooran to bat in the Super Over. "We discussed as a group and the name that) came up was (of) Nicholas Pooran's (for Super Over). He might not go through the best form of his life, but at the same time, you will trust your player in a hard situation like this," Pant said at the post-match presentation. —*PTI*

Justin Langer -PTI

Women's Asian Cup 2026: Young Tigresses arrive in China

SUZHOU, 27 APRIL

The India Under-17 women's national team, after a brief camp in Gurugram, reached Suzhou, China, on Monday for the AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup 2026.

India, which qualified for the tournament after 21 years, will begin its campaign with a match against Australia, followed by Japan and Lebanon in Group B.

The top two teams in the group and the two best third-placed teams among all three groups will make it to the quarterfinals.

Moreover, the semifinalists will qualify for the FIFA U-17 Women's World Cup Morocco 2026. The Young Tigresses arrived in Suzhou on Monday morning and will hold their first training session in the evening.

Under Italian head coach Pamela Conti, who was appointed in January, India has had a continuous training camp of more than three months, the bulk of which was held in Bengaluru.

It won the SAFF U19 Women's Championship title in February and won two friendlies against Myanmar in March. Earlier this month, they played three friendly matches against Russia in Sochi, and while they lost all three, it provided valuable experience of playing strong opponents ahead of the Asian challenge.

After returning from Russia, the Young Tigresses continued their training camp in Gurugram from April 20 to 26 before departing for China.

India squad for AFC U-17 Women's Asian Cup China 2026:

Goalkeepers: Munni, Surajmuni Kumari, Tamphasana Devi Konjengbam.

Defenders: Abhista Basnett, Alena Devi Sarangthem, Alisha Lyngdoh, Divyani Linda, Elizabed Lakra, Joyshini Chanu Huidrom, Ritu Badaik, Taniya Devi Tonambam.

Midfielders: Alva Devi Senjam, Bonifilia Shullai, Julan Nongmaithem, Olivia Chanu Ningthoujam, Pritika Barman, Redima Devi Chingkhamayum. —*PTI*

The India U17 women's squad has landed in China ahead of the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup 2026 -PTI

RR need something special against unbeaten Punjab

MULLANPUR, 27 APRIL

Riyan Parag, a captain short of runs, will need to lead from the front to challenge a peerless Punjab Kings in their Indian Premier League match here on Tuesday.

In the Shreyas Iyer-Ricky Ponting era that began last year, the Punjab Kings have scripted a sensational turnaround, making them the most consistent and assuring unit in the competition, attributes they longed for ages. Virat Kohli owned the tag of chase master with his remarkable consistency over the years, and now Iyer is on that path too. As a leader and batter, he has displayed commendable calm in high-pressure situations, helping the Punjab Kings stay unbeaten in the tournament thus far.

Riyan Parag -PTI

RR VS PBKS @ Mullanpur
MATCH STARTS 7.30 PM IST

Playing their last game of the season here before hosting their final three league games of the season in Dharamsala, Punjab Kings will be expected to steamroll the Rajasthan Royals. Iyer has led brilliantly, but the team as a whole has also functioned like a well-oiled unit. —*PTI*

ENGLAND SET TO PLAY WITH SL IN PAK

KARACHI, 27 APRIL

England are set to feature in a triangular one-day series with Sri Lanka in Pakistan as part of their preparation for next year's ICC 50-over World Cup.

A reliable source close to the Pakistan Cricket Board said on Monday that after long negotiations, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) had finally given its approval to participate in the triangular series.

PCB has already secured Sri Lanka Cricket's agreement for the triangular series, tentatively scheduled for December-January.

"The PCB is likely to hold matches at just two venues, Lahore and Karachi, but dates and venues would be finalized soon," the source said. —*PTI*

MBAPPE DIAGNOSED WITH A HAMSTRING INJURY

MADRID, 27 APRIL

Real Madrid said Monday that star forward Kylian Mbappe has injured his left hamstring, putting in doubt his participation in the Spanish league Clásico in two weeks.

The club did not give details on the severity of the injury or when Mbappé is expected to return. It said his recovery will depend on how the injury progresses.

Spanish media said the injury was not expected to sideline the France star for too long.

Madrid will play the Clásico against Barcelona on May 10 at the Camp Nou stadium. Madrid trails its Catalan rival by 11 points with five matches remaining in the season.—*PTI*

Hridoy's half-century leads B'desh past NZ in T20I series opener

CHATTOGRAM, 27 APRIL

Towhid Hridoy's half-century led Bangladesh to a six-wicket victory against New Zealand to open their T20 international series on Monday.

Hridoy finished 51 not out from 27 balls, including two fours and three sixes. He shared a 57-run partnership with Parvez Hossain and another 49 with Shamim Hossain in an unbeaten fifth wicket to help Bangladesh race to victory.

New Zealand posted a challenging 182 for six, after 51 apiece from Dane Cleaver and opener Katene Clarke, and appeared set for victory as its bowlers checked Bangladesh top order batters, leaving the host 77 for three in the 11th over.

But Hridoy's calculated aggression helped Bangladesh reach 183 for four with 12 balls to spare. Leg-spinner Ish Sodhi, the only holdover from New Zealand's recent World Cup campaign, led the visitors' early charge with two for 40. Hridoy then counterattacked to bring the asking run rate under control with support from Parvez

Bangladesh 183 for 4 (Hridoy 51*, Shamim 31*, Sodhi 2-40) beat New Zealand 182 for 6 (Cleaver 51, Clarke 51, Rishad 2-32) by six wickets. —*PTI*

Hridoy and Parvez -X/@BCB

THOMAS CUP FINALS

India storm into QFs with 5-0 sweep of Australia

HORSENS, 27 APRIL

India sealed a place in the Thomas Cup Finals quarterfinals with a commanding 5-0 sweep of Australia in a Group A tie here on Monday.

India and China occupy the top spots in the group. The 2022 champions had opened with a 4-1 win over Canada, while China blanked Australia 5-0 and beat Canada 4-1 earlier in the day.

The two sides will clash in their final group tie on Wednesday to decide the group topper.

Paris Olympian and Commonwealth Games champion Lakshya Sen set the tone with a 21-14, 21-16 win over Ephraim Stephen Sam to hand India an early lead.

US Open champion Ayush Shetty, who recently finished runner-up at the Badminton Asia Championships, doubled the advantage with a dominant 21-8, 21-6 victory over Shrey Dhand. India's top doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, the Asian Games champions, made it 3-0, defeating Rizky Hidayat and Jack Yu 21-14, 21-16 to clinch the tie. HS Prannoy, a bronze medallist at the 2023 World Championships and Asian Games, extended the lead with a 21-11, 21-17 win over Rishi Honda Boopathy in under 30 minutes.

In the second doubles, Hariharan Amsakarunan and M.R. Arjun outplayed Andika Ramadiansyah and Ephraim Stephen Sam 21-12, 21-10 as India completed a flawless outing without dropping a match. —*PTI*

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty in action -X/@BADMINTON

Indians target group dominance as a new era begins

LONDON, 27 APRIL

India's men's and women's teams head into the 2026 World Team Table Tennis Championships, beginning here on Tuesday, with a familiar mix of promise and pressure.

Placed in Group 7, the Indian men's team featuring Manav Thakkar (WR No.38), G. Sathiyan (42), Manush Shah (51), Harmeet Desai (80) and Payas Jain (127) will start as clear favourites against Slovakia, Tunisia and Guatemala.

On paper, the rankings tilt heavily in India's favour, particularly against a Slovak lineup led by Lubomir Pistej (149) and Yang Wang (184). Yet, the absence of now-retired Sharath Kamal's experience in crunch ties could test India's composure, especially in tight five-match encounters. The women's team finds itself in Group 6 alongside Ukraine, Uganda, and Rwanda. Led by Manika Batra (WR No. 49), India also has Yashaswini Ghorpade (88), Diya Chitale (92), Sutirtha Mukherjee (120) and Syndrela Das (175), who at 16 is the youngest from the country to play at the worlds. —*PTI*